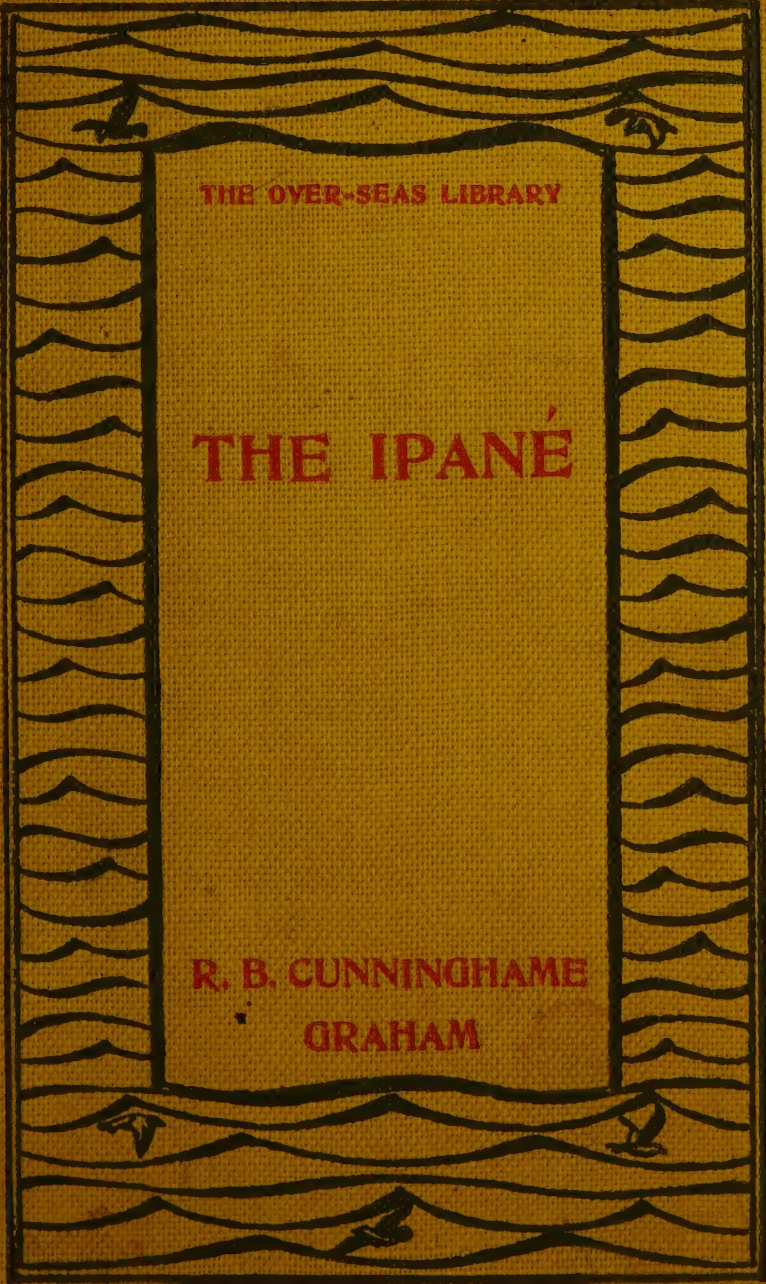




THE OVER-SEAS LIBRARY

THE IPANÉ

R. B. CUNNINGHAME
GRAHAM



"THE OVERSEAS"

Where are the "Ends of the Empire"? and which are the Over-Seas? At "the Ends" of one may arise the beginnings of other Empires to come. It is notorious that wherever an English-speaking community settles and opens up new lands, it speedily speaks for itself as a Centre; and so rapid is the growth of the great Colonies, that Ministers to-day writing despatches to Dependencies over-seas, receive their answers from nations to-morrow.

But great as is the growth of the Empire and the enterprise of its peoples, the new native-born literatures take years to germinate and generations to arrive. Thence comes it that often we do not understand the atmospheres of the new English-speaking peoples, and often misunderstand the problems, the ambitions, the attitudes, befitting them as new races. And while the British Empire grows richer daily in patriotic fervours, in speeches, in splendour, in cant, and in the oracular assurances of Statesmen, the English people seeks to understand its cousins by the interchange of cablegrams, by debates, and by all the ambiguities of official memoranda.

It is, however, the artist's work to bring the people of his nation and their atmosphere before the eyes of another. It is the artist alone, great or small, who, by revealing and interpreting the life around him, makes it living to the rest of the world. And the artist is generally absent! In the case of the English in India, ten years ago, while the literature of information was plentiful, the artist was absent; Mr. Kipling arrived and discovered modern India to



LIBRARY."

the English imagination. And to-day, in the midst of a general movement for Empire expansion, with talk of Federation, Jingoism, and with the doing of real work, the artists in literature are generally absent, the artists who should reveal the tendencies, the hidden strength and weakness, the capacities of the new communities.

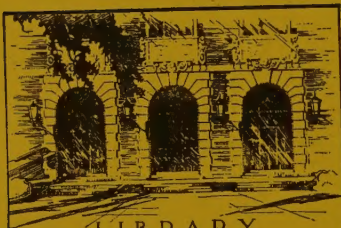
The aim of "The Over-Seas Library" is purely experimental. It proposes to print literature from any quarter that deals with the actual life of the English outside England, whether of Colonial life or the life of English emigrants, travellers, traders, officers, over-seas, among foreign and native races, black or white. Pictures of life in the American States will not necessarily be excluded.

"The Over-Seas Library" makes no pretence at Imperial drum-beating, or putting English before Colonial opinion. It aims, instead, at getting the atmosphere and outlook of the new peoples recorded, if such is possible. It aims at being an Interchange between all parts of the Empire without favour, an Interchange of records of the life of the English-speaking peoples, and of the Englishmen beyond seas, however imperfect, fragmentary and modest such records or accounts may be.

The Editor will be glad to receive any MSS. addressed to him, c/o the Publisher.

E. G.

11, Paternoster Buildings,
London.



LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

Tom Turner Collection

823
G763i
cop. 2

The . . .
Overseas
Library .



THE IPANÉ



"Norrozway, Norrozway, beyond the Sea."



List of the Series.

- I. THE IPANÉ.
- II. THE CAPTAIN OF THE LOCUSTS.
- III. IN GUIANA WILDS.

(Others in preparation.)

Return this book on or before the
Latest Date stamped below.

University of Illinois Library

MAY 16 1959

JUN 19 1960

NOV 17 1973

NOV 6 1975

JUL 11 1997



CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM

THE IPANÉ



LONDON
T. FISHER UNWIN
PATERNOSTER SQUARE

M DCCC XCIX

OVERSEAS LIBRARY

PREFACE

NONE of the following sketches and stories have the least connection with one another, or with each other (*l'un et l'autre se disent*).

But it may chance that thus collected some one may see in them a nexus undiscerned by me: mystic, I hope, for it is in the fashion, and no one, even in literature, who cares to lag behind.

Now, to my thinking, misapprehension still is rife as to the motives which cause men to write. Books have been written for many purposes, moral, religious, lewd, improving, ethical, and to make people stare; but many think, even to-day, when education, which, as we all know, intensifies artistic comprehension, spreading it even amongst the educated, is so diffused, that men write books to please a mysterious entity known as the public; that they regard this Mumbo-Jumbo

Preface

as politicians do, or as the county councillor who is uncertain even if he be a cuckold till he has duly put the matter to the democratic vote.

Nothing more false. For the most part all books are written from vanity, for hope of gain, either pecuniary or of some other nature, and now and then to please the writer, for it is known that some have gone to sea for pleasure, and sailors say that those who do so would go to hell for fun.

And so of books. Few men know why they write, and most men are ashamed of all they do when once it stares them in the face in moulded type.

“Oversea Series,” eh? Well, the Editor is not so sure of that, but let it pass. Thank Heaven I wrote that which is here collected to please no single being, and if my own feelings may be taken as the measure of the discerning public’s generous judgment, I have succeeded well.

R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM.

January, 1899.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE IPANÉ	13
UN PELADO	37
UN ANGELITO	52
THE LAZO	68
THE BOLAS	84
SS. "ATLAS"	98
BRISTOL FASHION	121
TANGER LA BLANCA	143
A SURVIVAL	155
HEATHER JOCK	174
SALVAGIA	188
SNAEKOLL'S SAGA	204
WITH THE NORTH-WEST WIND	226
NIGGERS	237
AT TORFAIEH	257

THE IPANÉ

I

THE “Casa Horrocks” stood at the junction of one of the sandy staircased watercourses which did duty for side streets in Asuncion de Paraguay, and a deserted plaza overgrown with castor-oil plants and with wild indigo, bounded by ruined houses on one side and on the other by a few mameys, and by a hedge of orange-trees, in which at night the fireflies glistened, flashing to and fro as they were humming-birds all dipped in phosphorus. By day the horses of the neighbours played about and fought with one another; or, tied with a “maneador” to a stout peg, stood drowsily

The Overseas Library

stamping at flies and hanging down their heads in the fierce sunlight. Sometimes a company of prisoners armed with machetes made pretence to cut down grass, their guards meanwhile unarmed and smoking in the shade. In South America at the time I write of (for now I fear that competition has brought about an economic change), prisoners seemed to think themselves an honoured class; few took the trouble to escape, but if their guards got drunk or misbehaved themselves, the prisoners not infrequently escorted them back to the gaol. Yet so strong is habit that these selfsame men, who most of them could have escaped at any moment, and many of whom came, went, and worked about the country towns, spoke of themselves with tears in their eyes as "los cautivos" and seemed to think their not uncomfortable lot, most undeserved.

The Casa Horrocks had scant architectural pretensions, and yet was not less pleasing than an "æsthetic" house "faked" up with terra-

The Ipané

cotta work looking like ill-burnt piecrust, and with the woodwork gaping after an English winter's rain. Built round a courtyard with an "algibe" in the centre to catch the rain, the walls "adobe," solid and well cemented over; the open ceilings showed great beams of "jacaranda" or of "canela"; flat the roof as roofs of houses in the East; eaves deep, and from them slender tubes of hardwood sticking out a foot or two to carry off the rain, which in the rainy season spouted like waterfalls upon the passers-by; the rooms all opening into the court and into one another; the door of solid "urunday," studded with wrought-iron nails, and from it a dark passage called the "zaguan," which led to a second floor furnished with spy-hole, and with two small embrasures to fire from, should the "infidel" in times gone by have ventured an attack. Inside, scant furniture, no beds, but hammocks made of ornamental cotton with long lace fringes swinging in every room or to the pillars of the court;

The Overseas Library

the chairs apparently contrived for giants, with seats of Spanish leather kept in their place by large brass nails ; the tables solid and on each of them a porous jug of water, on the outside of which by day and night thick drops of moisture hung. No pictures and no clocks and all the walls inside dazzling with white-wash, whilst the house itself—which may, for all I know, have been contrived by a “conquistador”—shone like a ripe banana, with a coat of saffron-coloured paint. From “Azotea” or from “Mirador,” across the river, you saw the “Chaco,” which, with its palms, its billows of waving Pampa grass, and with its air of prediluvian impregnability, gave the lie direct to the sporadic civilisation of the capital of Paraguay.

The tramway running from the harbour to the railway station, the “Tolderia” of the Payaguas, who stalked about in all the glory of their feathers and polygamy ; the “Correntinos” riding half-wild horses through the

The Ipané

streets ; and yet again the bank, the post-office, telegraph station and the steamers in the port, set forth that barbarism and progress had met and kissed (but out of mere politeness), and after kissing had drawn apart again, determined never to be friends. Cave of Adullam, Club, general meeting-place, give it what name you will, the Casa Horrocks served as rendezvous for all those waifs and strays who in the islands of the Pacific must have been "Beach Combers," but who in Paraguay, perhaps restrained by a life on horseback, never attained to the full meanness of a Pacific Beach Comber's estate. The Spanish proverb says, "There is no sane man on a horse's back"—"No hay hombre cuerdo à caballo"—and it may well be said no horseman, with the exception of the jockey now and then, is quite a cur. Riding, Cervantes says, "makes one man look a gentleman, and yet another show like a groom" ; but still the groom himself, by virtue of the company he keeps, remains

The Overseas Library

more self-respecting than do the other members of the class who live upon the follies of mankind. So in the Casa Horrocks was assembled a heterogeneous crew. Firstly, the master of the house, together with his Paraguayan wife, he having left a legally qualified helpmate in Buenos Ayrés, to mourn his loss. Rarest of types, a clever fat man; like Falstaff loving meat, drink, women, comfort, and horses; a good musician, a "plum centre shot," capable engineer; ingenious linguist, having travelled the whole world over, and eking out Guarani with Turkish, Spanish, and with Portuguese, and still in such a manner as to seem rather eclectic than ridiculous.

Lieutenant Hansel, late of the British navy, a choleric Celto-Briton, á lo Correntino—that is, in black merino Turkish trousers, high riding-boots, vicuña poncho, red silk handkerchief tied round the neck with the two points neatly spread out behind upon his shoulders in the same style the artist's "contadina" was as-

The Ipané

sumed to wear her headdress in the 'fifties. Like a fire of Vesta was his short clay pipe, cigar, or cigarette; impervious he was to all known fermented drink, nervous by temperament, and yet with nerves of iron, manacled day and night in huge iron spurs, which report said he wore to prove he had never been a sailor; hating "old Gladstone" as the first Article of his creed; Liberal in theory but of the "roaring forty" breed of Liberals, who in reality are more Tory than the Tories; a gentleman withal and a bold horseman, mixed in his metaphors at times, as when he spoke of "carrying weather helm" to characterise a "borer" or described a "bucker" as having got him in a jabble of a sea.

Crosskey, a youth caught fresh from College, and sent to the River Plate in order to acquire colonial experience, which he appeared to do by most assiduously frequenting "bailes," "fandangos," "novenas," or any function where the Paraguayan female population used to

The Overseas Library

congregate. A female population in the ratio of thirteen to one man, the men having been all killed in the long, lately terminated, struggle with Brazil. A war which left the country all but depopulated, the President himself having been killed when riding the last horse (a little roan), upon the plains of the Aquidabán.

Women did everything ; gathered the crops, tended the flocks, shot, fished, and hunted, and in some villages the very Alcalde was an old Indian woman, who, with a European footman's hat, long cane with silver top, and air of office, administered such justice as the times required, to the full as well as had she been properly qualified with beard and University degree. The national female dress even in ordinary times was most exiguous : a loose, coarse cotton-shift, called a tupoi, doing duty for all the pomps and circumstance which the female form divine seems to require in richer lands. Being *en famille*, so to speak, or at the least *en sexe*, even the tupoi in country places was

The Ipané

not infrequently held all too cumbersome, and when a traveller came to a rancho a general stampede ensued till some one found the single garment in the place, clothed herself in it, and came forth, full of most courteous salutations, half Spanish and half Guarani, and a request the stranger would take possession of "his" house. A Portuguese from Goa known by the natives as the "English Indian," a Greek who greased the boots, and an Australian bookkeeper who never kept a book, with numerous Paraguayan women who seemed to come and go in a kaliedoscopic fashion and who smoked cigars as thick as candles all day long, made up the tail of the establishment. Order and regularity were things unknown ; meals were served up when men were hungry, and consisted chiefly of jerked beef, stewed up with rice and pepper, sprinkled with mandioca flour, or of a vile concoction known as "Angou," in which eggs, mandioca, fish, and general "menavellings" were the ingredients. Bottles of square - faced gin

The Overseas Library

(Albert Van Hoytema, the Palm Tree brand) were used as candlesticks. The heat was like a furnace, and clouds of insects, all most interesting to entomologists, rendered life one perpetual battle, and proved the aptness of the Spanish proverb that "eating and scratching is but to begin." During the day the horses fed about the streets and in the plaza, and at evening women led them down to the river to drink and bathe. The world went on, no doubt, in Paris and in London as of old, posters appearing in the streets with statements calculated to deceive the general public writ large upon them. Empires were struggling for their life. Sedan and Gravelotte, the Siege of Paris, the Commune, and the rest of the events of 1870 were going on; but we recked nothing of them, taking our recreation quite contentedly, watching the negro regiment of Brazilians, cantoned outside the town, perform what it considered drill, looking with admiration on the squadron of Rio Grandense cavalry

The Ipané

manœuvre, or on occasion strolling to the station to see the train come in driven by a sort of Belgian engineer assisted by two female stokers, naked but for tupois. Right underneath the Casa Horrocks lay the Brazilian fleet, the flagship, the *Aquidaban*, *Jequitinhonha*, *Paraíba*, *Terror do Mondo*, and the rest, in the positions where they had anchored eighteen months ago, at the surrender of the town. Italian schooners, like that which Garibaldi once commanded, plied up and down, making the passage to Buenos Ayres, “aguas abajo” —that is, with the stream—in twenty days, but taking fifty, sixty, a hundred, or as many as God willed, “aguas arriba,” or against the stream. Canoes with Indians came and went, bringing great piles of oranges, bundles of mandioca, maize, and “pindo” for the horses, and blending with the landscape almost as perfectly as the great rafts of “camalote” which floated with the stream, gathering in magnitude as they advanced and carrying with

The Overseas Library

them now and then monkeys and snakes, and once a tiger, which tradition said landed at Santa Fé and, walking through the streets, devoured a Christian. More or less ill-appointed steamers sailed for Corrientes or for Corumbá, taking the futile merchandise which Europe "dumps" on countries such as Paraguay; and in the cabins a Brazilian Governor journeying to "Cuyabá," some generals, colonels, a priest or two, a demi-mondaine changing her garrison, an orchid-hunter much bemused in gin, and all the waifs and strays of cosmopolitan humanity who, "outside our flag," pursue their useless lives, under the sixfold international code of law so neatly codified by Colonel Colt.

A nondescript society which set me thinking whether if after all Pizarro had not better have herded swine in the "dehesas" between Truxillo and Medellin until his death, Almagro kept his shop in Panama, Cortes continued to make love and fight in Cuba, and Alvar Nuñez

The Ipané

have remained in Florida amongst the Seminoles. But had they done so, perchance America had been reserved for us and over it our flag had floated with "Empire," "Pauperism," "Sunday," and a contingent of the "native" troops from every State to tramp our streets at the recurrent ten years' Jubilee.

Pleasant as the spectacle would be of a whole world taking its speech from White-chapel, still, *à la longue*, it might become monotonous, and had it been so, such an assembly as used to meet at Casa Horrocks could never have been seen. Somehow or other none of us liked Hartogg; perhaps it was his learning, his nationality, his way of stating what he knew was false, in such convincing fashion that it seemed more feasible than truth; it may have been his Paraguayan wife, to whom, being an atheist and violent Bible-smasher, he had been married in a church, thus losing caste according to our notions, for, with us, concu-

The Overseas Library

binage with "native" women was an honourable state, but marriage carried with it something of degradation. In the same fashion I believe in British India that the Briton thinks no shame to pass an hour or two in amicable converse with a "native" woman, but thinks himself disgraced if he promotes the selfsame woman to the state of mistress. These points of morals are so nice, so intricate, and so fallacious that it is well to set them down whilst they exist, in order that in future generations men may have subjects to enlarge upon, after the question of the due relation of the sexes has been pronounced upon and settled by some County Council, or other body duly elected on a democratic suffrage, and therefore competent to deal with matters such as this in such a way as to be pleasing to the greatest number of the greatest fools. The Paraguayan wife was harmless, servile, serviceable, and would have been pretty had she enjoyed the boon of European birth; the children well brought up,

The Ipané

labouring by education to supply deficiency of blood. Strangely enough, and unlike all philosophers one reads of, Hartogg feared death. Why, he did not say, perhaps it was from seeing men so frequently take leave of life upon short notice. We reasoned with him, striving to show that death by violence was natural in Paraguay; that it was over soon, could not hurt much, and when got through with, it was ten to one it was as pleasant as the most orthodox departure from a bed. In fact, we used the arguments used by the friend who walks beside one to the dentist's door, and, conscious of the soundness of his teeth, pours all his wit, all his philosophy upon one, and at last departs, leaving one on the doorstep half irresolute to enter and still resolved, at any rate, to place a barrier between oneself and the unseasonable philosopher.

So seated, capping verses, smoking, listening to Paraguayan "tristes" on the guitar, watching the fireflies, waiting for the revolution and

The Overseas Library

the rising of the stream, drinking innumerable matéés, and "making time" in the best way we could, it came upon us as a relief that Hartogg had invested in a "Yerbal" some fifty leagues "aguas arriba," and with his wife and children, books and favourite mule, was soon to start to take possession of his place upon the steamer *Ipané*. I think it struck us all that the reproach was going to be removed. Why should a man in Paraguay read books on botany, study the flora and fauna, write to societies in Gotha, make plans of things, search for antiquities, collect old manuscripts, ride like a Neapolitan, lose himself whenever he went out, and spend his life in useless studies when gin, caña, horses, cards, politics, business, and other things were much more obvious?

Of all the miserable and patched-up craft that, to the imminent danger of their engineers, plied in asthmatic fashion on the Paraguay, the *Ipané* was worst. Condemned in Buenos

The Ipané

Ayres, bought for a song by an Italian for the Paraguayan trade, broken down a hundred times, engines a mass of rust, pipes served with rope-yarn, cylinders doubtful, paddles with half the floats long broken from running upon sand-banks, smoke-stack stayed on the one side with a rusty chain and on the other with a raw-hide rope, paint cracked, the glass of half the scuttles gone, the seams of decks gaping like cat-fish in a drought, her single wretched quarter-boat used as a hencoop, the *Ipané* was known from Santa Fé to Cuyabá as the most perfect death-trap in the trade. Sensible engineers—these chiefly Scotchmen who had drifted borne by the north-east trade of whiskey which sets out of Greenock and takes a Scotchman round the world, leaving him sometimes weather- (or whiskey-) bound in Paraguay—had long forsaken her, the last remarking with an oath that, blast him! he would never undertake again to navigate “a blamed revolving scrap-heap.” Basques and

The Overseas Library

Italians, Swedes and Norwegians, one and all, had left declaring that the partition betwixt the *Ipané* and hell was far too thin for them. But as a fool or wise man (for the result places him in his proper category) always turns up for such a job, a stranded stage-coach driver who once had worked a donkey-engine in Bahia Blanca stepped into the breach, and with a crew of negroes, Neapolitans, Indians, and an Irish fireman, used to force the *Ipané* from Asuncion to Corumbá, running the pressure up to a hundred pounds an inch instead of the forty which her clattering engines tested to sixty might have borne with tolerable ease. So to this Argo, made as clean as holystone and paint laid on the night before could make her, we all turned out to escort the German Argonauts about to sail.

A curious appearance we must have made with Horrocks on an enormous horse riding like a Silenus at the head, dressed all in white, decked in a "jipi japa" hat and patent leather

The Ipané

riding-boots, on the legs of which the Paraguayan eagle flapped his wings, embroidered in red silk. The rest dressed chiefly in the Correntino style except the Consuls, of which Asuncion boasted a mighty store, and the apothecary, also a German, together with a German captain in the Brazilian fleet; these last in European clothes, to which the Germans added spectacles, as being the hall-mark of their nationality. Hartogg, his wife and children, came in a bullock-cart drawn by two apocalyptic oxen, conducted by a Paraguayan who, clad in white and with a red "bayeta" cloak over one arm, sat on the yoke and beat the oxen on the horns with a stout wooden mallet, or, jumping off, prodded them lustily with a long cane, pouring a torrent of continuous blasphemy in Guarani upon the unoffending beasts. Lastly a negro led a mule, the only animal tradition said that Hartogg dared to ride, for as he said "the mule is by so much the most damnable of all

The Overseas' Library

the beasts that I prefer him, for when he throws you off he also kicks the men that catch him, in the stomach, with his feet." Cocktails discussed, the passengers aboard, the mule secured close to the windlass, the wretched steamer, after the boiler duly "primed" upon the lookers-on, got under way, and heaving, rattling, with a noise below as of a thousand rusty chains, staggered into mid-stream, fired off her green brass gun, and dipped her flag as she passed underneath the stern of the Brazilian flagship, sweltering at anchor in the blazing sun. Hartogg, after a hurried leavetaking, leaned upon the rail, and the last sight of him alive was his square German face, red nose and bushy beard, bent shoulders, and greasy alpaca coat, as, holding a child in one fat hand, he waved his black straw hat and shouted out, "Atios hasda odra vez."

The cavalcade returned to town racing along the sandy half-deserted streets, rushing through clumps of castor-oil bushes, "pechando"—that

The Ipané

is, riding their horses "breast on" upon their neighbours, trying to unhorse each other by putting a foot under the nearest rider's foot, stooping and picking up handfuls of the red sand to throw in one another's eyes, and, galloping to the Casa Horrocks, drew up with a jerk, and each man after hobbling his horse got off to mix a cocktail and to drink success to Hartogg and his "Yerbal," whilst the opinion seemed to be that for a German and a fool, Hartogg was not so bad a fellow as he looked. Over a cocktail in Asuncion time soon slips by, and whilst the horses hung their heads outside, hobbled and hitched to posts, day faded tropically into night no twilight intervening, and as the company sat talking in broken Spanish so that all might understand a little of what was said, a sound of lamentation rose from the port and spread through every street of the half-peopled town. Rockets shot up, lights flashed in the Brazilian squadron, steam-launches came and went, and from the

The Overseas Library

Camp, Rio Grandense orderlies rushed past towards the port, their horses flying through the black Paraguayan night as they were horses of the Walkyrie. Down at the port the loafer, without whose presence no port in any land is quite complete, imparts the news. About ten miles above the town a rapid known as "the Pass" ran strongly, the current sweeping through it at the rate of seven knots. In trying to surmount the difficulty the old machinery had failed, the boiler burst, and Hartogg and some dozen passengers been killed. The loafer seemed to see the hand of God in the calamity, for, with some quite unnecessary oaths, he told us that the mule when blown into the water had emerged upon an island, in which he saw that God had not been willing that such a good "sobre paso" beast should die. On the gun-deck of the Brazilian flagship the survivors were laid out, wrapped all in cotton-wool, livid and horrible, and looking like so many scalded pigs, and gasping their lives out tortured by mosquitoes and by heat.

The Ipané

Amongst them Hartogg, just at point of death, conscious and cynical, scalded so horribly as to be all one wound. Beside him stood his wife and children quite unharmed; Brazilian sailors gathered in groups, all weeping, for a negro soon is moved to tears; doctors went to and fro with ice and bandages, ostensibly to aid, but really studying the cases, and as pleased as vivisectors when they hit upon some curious way of giving useless pain. A priest prepared his tackling, and stood by ready to hear confession, soothe the mind, and give the soul its passport into bliss.

Then Hartogg beckoned feebly to his wife, and said in Spanish, "Your good God is careless; let the priest bless me, it will do you good; I am glad the mule is safe—it must have been a true believer all the time. Adios, God is great, but inconsiderate." Then stretching out his miserable hand towards the frightened children he expired, and the scared priest advancing signed the atheist's body with the cross.

The Overseas Library

Out towards Lambaré, along a narrow, deep-cut road, planted with orange and "paraíso" trees, ruinous but yet walled in with mouldering Tapia walls, is situate the "Cementerio Protestante," where Germans, Englishmen, atheists, and those who die outside the Christian faith in Paraguay are suffered to remain, until the armadillos dig them up.

There all the sojourners at Casa Horrocks brought Hartogg's body in a bullock-cart, stretched on an open bier, and with his snub red nose, looking more like a radish than in life, emerging from the flowers which served to hide the horrid marks upon his face. Some sort of "dust to dust" and pistol-firing, snorting of horses; and, whilst they lowered the body with lazos into the sandy grave, a glass fell from the clothes, and as his youngest daughter picked it up she smiled, remarking that she thought it must be one of the glasses of "el microposio de papa."

UN PELADO

NOT far from where the Old Comanche Trail crosses the Nueces lies the little town of Encinal in Western Texas, county of La Salle, upon the International and Great Northern Railway track. A little one-horse place, just where the "post oak" country touches the great open but mesquité-covered prairies of the south. Oak forests to the north, oak and more oak, as "post oak," "black jack," "live oak," with hickory, pecan, red bud and hackleberry ; bottoms rich and alluvial in which grow cotton ; "bayous" alive with alligators ; woods, woods, and still more woods, right up to Texarcana, on by Nacodoches, and from thence to Little Rock and the Hot Springs upon the Arkansas. To the south the prairies stretching to the Rio Grande, once open grassy seas, when the Comanches and Lipanes burnt them

The Overseas Library

every spring, as sheep farmers in Scotland fire the heather, but now all overgrown with chaparral,¹ composed of dwarf mesquité and sweet flowering guisaché, low-growing ahuehuate intermixed with cactus, till nearing the great river, the véry Nile of North America, all vegetation ceases, and salt plains replace the scrub-grown prairie, and at last even the salt grass vanishes and a stone-covered sandy waste serves as a barrier between the rival States.

The town itself a Helot amongst cities, and contrived, apparently, to fill the double object of showing what a town should never be and of example to the world at large of how much uglier a modern mushroom town can be than an encampment of the Diggers or the Utes. Frame-houses made in the North, then numbered in pieces and railed South, and put together like a Chinese puzzle, shingles for roofing, and each dwelling raised on blocks after the fashion

¹ Chaparral, from chaparro, a dwarf oak, has come to mean in Mexico and Texas any underwood or scrub.

Un Pelado

of a haystack. No shade, no trees, except a straggling China tree or two in the sand waste known as the Plaza. A tramway running down the thoroughfare called Constitution Street. A coloured Baptist church, a second Presbyterian ditto, and the cathedral, half of adobe¹ and half of "rock," conveyed at great expense from Goliad by the members of the Pioneer faith, as Roman Catholics are styled in Texas. Three bar-rooms known as "saloons," a bank, some stores, in which all kinds of notions, from "ladies' fixings" down to waggon grease and coal oil, were on sale, and where hung "quirts," Mexican bits and horse-hair reins, with "cinches," Winchesters and white-handled pistols for cowboys on the spree. Before each house a horse tied by a lariat and saddled with a high-peaked saddle, with a rifle hanging to the horn, stood sleepily.

Horses in every street, in every yard, in waggons, buggies, hacks; mares hitched to

¹ Sun-dried brick.

The Overseas Library

Milburn waggons, with foals running at their feet. Horses asleep right in the middle of the Plaza ; horses that strayed about like dogs in an Oriental town and seemed to have no owner ; some tied to posts, apparently asleep, till an incautious stranger passed too near, when, with a squeal, they bounded from the ground and stretched their lariats quite taut, till the strain slackening they plunged against the post, like boats left at a stair and bumping on the steps as the waves rise and fall.

Nothing æsthetic in the whole town, and still the people not without the attraction that energy imparts. "Cleargritted" to a man, shooting "plum centre," riding a "pitching" horse as they were Indians, free-swearers, proof against all kinds of drink, not civilised and yet not savages, voting the Democratic ticket straight, and determined to uphold what they thought justice, especially when "niggers," Mexicans, or Indians transgressed their code.

Across the creek straggled the quarter of

Un Pelado

the Mexicans known as Chihuahua. Entering its purlieus, one came upon another world. The houses either made of adobes, or else mere huts, a cross between an Indian "wickey-up" and a Mexican "jacal," were made, as nests of prairie dogs are made, of everything that came to hand. Kerosene-tins and hides, sides of stage-coaches, ends of railway cars, with all the wreckage of a prairie town, were used in their make up. Still they seemed adequate for men in blankets to lounge against and plan what they could steal. Wrapped in "serapes," overshadowed by "Poblano" hats, their feet encased in high-heeled riding-boots, and in their eyes a look of half good-natured villainy, the population stood confessed a rogue. Few worked, all owned a horse, a game-cock, and every self-respecting man on feast-days went to play monte in a building lettered "Restoran and Koffe." So Encinal sat facing its suburb, the two destined, like man and wife, never to understand each other's

The Overseas Library

motives though living side by side. In Encinal the people, go-ahead commercial men, but yet idealists like all the members of the Celto-Saxon race, determined to deceive and be deceived on all those points which the uneducated and slothful Mexicans in the suburb of Chihuahua perceived quite clearly and acted on like true materialists. In Encinal, Sunday, with all its horrors of closed shops, the "bell punch" in the bar-rooms, and an air of gloom congealed the town like a black frost at each week's end. Across the creek it was a holiday, with cock-fights, races, and an air of merriment which in itself went far towards atoning for the past week's villainy. On one side, moral citizens, under cover of the night, slipped when they could up to the "Mansions," mysterious, strongly fenced in, and solitary houses on the bluff which all the day looked dreary and deserted, and by night were all lit up, and flared with the electric light, which of course found its way to Encinal whilst Paris,

Un Pelado

London, and Berlin still clung to gas. But still these stealers to the "Mansions" in the dark, were moral men, because on Sunday they all sat in church ejaculating Hallelujah or joining in the responses audibly, according to their creed.

No one was moral in Chihuahua, or made the least pretence to be. If men disliked their wives, they took another to help them bear their cross; and if a wife found that her husband treated her unkindly, she too looked round and cast her eyes upon some able-bodied unconnected man to help her bear her woes. Still, in Chihuahua the women understood woman's first duty—that is, to be a woman—more clearly than the elliptic print-clothed "females" or elaborately arrayed "white ladies" in the town of Encinal.

But as mankind is ever wont to typify, making the virtues feminine, the vices (if I mistake not) male, calling the Spaniard proud, the Italian treacherous, the Frenchman fickle, and so on, and understanding best what a town,

The Overseas Library

country, race, or what not, is like by summing up his, their, or its characteristics in some man, I do the same.

Therefore, I take José Maria Mendiola and G. M. Hodges as prototypes, both of Chihuahua and of Encinal. The one a Mexican, working at what is called "freight hauling" in the United States, that is what we should style a waggoner. The other "Station Agent," and a keeper of a local store. Both rogues, but different in degree, and each unable to discover any taint of virtue in the other's life.

José Maria, long, brown and thin, his lank black hair showing his Indian blood, his furtive eye and nervous hands all proving him to be what the Americans, for reasons not explained, refer to as a "Greaser."

Hodges, a "real white man," fresh-coloured with the sandy hair and clear blue eyes which mark the man destined by Providence to keep a shop.

Just how the thing "kim round," as Texans say, no one was ever sure.

The Overseas Library

section of the 'doodle-bug,' and remarks he guessed he almost lost the 'round up' after all, as 'road agents' held up the car in which he travelled, at the long switch in the 'perara' outside Vermillionville. After a drink I started out to interview 'our Mary,' as you might call José Maria. Found him quite chipper, mighty peart, and sassy as an Indian pony on the young grass, smoking a loud cigar. Maria allows that he was raised at Las Moras, Kinney County, Texas. Has no record of his birth, but guesses he is twenty-five. Was reared in Western Texas and says: 'I have always lived there, never lived nowhere else. I have never wanted to live anywhere else. No wife (sabe), therefore no children to mourn for me. Old man and mother still both living near Encinal; sisters, brothers, two or three will see me die. I reckon they will also see I am not afraid to die.'

"As he said this, he drew his blanket (called

Un Pelado

it a serape) round his shoulders and shivered, for it was a mighty piercing norther, and he was dressed like most 'Pelados'¹ in cotton fixings, all except his blanket.

“ ‘Yes, señor; I have no trade, but little education, speaky no English. Understand him? Yes. All my life I have been a hauler, with a mule-wagon.’

“ ‘Home influences?’

“ ‘No, señor; very poor Mexican. Have drunk some mezcal — not very much — too much. Yes, I killed Hodges; he took my ivory-handled² pistol. He swindled me, and I shot him.

“ ‘What do I think of my sentence?’

“ ‘There is no justice in it. If there was any justice anywhere they would not take

¹ A Pelado is a poor Mexican, literally “stripped.”

² It is the ambition of every Texan and most Mexicans to own either an ivory-handled or a mother-of-pearl handled pistol. It gratifies them just as much as a baronetcy does a successful sweater, and is more readily compassed by the poor in spirit.

The Overseas Library

my life on the thing they are building out there. All the proceedings were in English. I did not understand a word. They told me I was to be hung. I said "Bueno." Curse your Corregidores; curse your Courts! No, I am not religious; born a Roman Catholic, but am a Universalist; think all religions should get a fair show. That saw and hammer go all day, only at night I get some rest. Sabe, eh? They finished the scaffold and pulled it down again because it was not quite level. Oh, these Americans; what does it matter if it was level or not? Even the earth is not quite level, for a poor man, very poor Mexican.'

"This let me out [remarks the talented reporter] and I lit for the Maverick House, and after some 'Rock and Rye,' sat down to think about what I had heard. I allow that Mendiola was, like most picayune 'Greasers,' really a fatalist, reckoned he had a Kismet or a something which predestined him to do

Un Pelado

the deed. Anyhow, he is not the first citizen of La Salle who has gone up the golden stair with the assistance of a half-inch rope.

“Back at the Maverick House—all over now. José Maria just turned off. He looked pale, but showed grit, and in a neat-fitting black suit (Dollar Store cut) made an elegant appearance. One of the most singular features of the whole show was that there was little swearing or ribaldry amongst the crowd; even the Aztecs, who had turned out in force, some coming from Carrizo Springs the night before, and camping in the Plaza, seeming not much excited. Father Kosbiel, a Polander, had ‘corpse’ in charge. José stood mighty quiet, and as the City Marshal finished reading the warrant, slightly shrugged his shoulders and said ‘Muy bien.’ The reverend father then performed the offices for the deceased, and turning to the people said: ‘Citizens of Encinal and of Cotulla, this poor Mexican, who stands beside me, will shortly stand before his God.

The Overseas Library

He asks your pardon, and regrets that he can speak no English so as to express to you that he is penitent, but he humbly asks for the sympathy of all men as one about to die.' The reverend father seemed much overcome, but Mendiola remained unmoved, and merely saying, 'Adios, Padre,' stepped on the scaffold, and in an instant was jerked into eternity. 'Dead,' said the physician, 'in four minutes.' The people gossiped awhile, unhitched their horses, and then dispersed. I guess Maria Mendiola was a stupid animal, but he showed 'clear grit' right to the end. Father Kosbiel says he died a Catholic, and that the manner of his going showed his trust in God. Dunno, guess he said he was a Universalist, but any way he seemed the least concerned of the whole outfit, and looked as if he would be thankful when the affair was done."

Thus far the reporter, but an aged settler, as the shavings flew from his pocket-knife and whittling stick pronounced the epitaph:—

Un Pelado

“No sense at all,” said he, turning towards the nearest saloon ; “just didn’t have no sense at all. Like killing a goat, didn’t have sense enough to be afraid.”

UN ANGELITO

ALL day we had been riding over the south "campo" of the prairie of Buenos Ayres, between the mountains of Tandil and where the trail which led to Bahia Blanca crosses the Tres Arroyos.

It seemed that never had our "tropilla" given so much trouble to drive; still it was well selected, both as to colour and general undesirability to ride. The mare was brown and white, the foal which followed her, lemon and white with four black feet, the horses black and white, all with their manes well hogged after the Gaucho fashion, leaving a lock upon the withers by which to mount; and all in such condition that one could have counted money on their backs—two of them were neither tame nor wild; two neither wild nor tame; two but half broken (*medio bagualon*), one difficult to

Un Angelito

mount, another almost impossible to catch, and when caught, worth nothing but to fasten to a stake at night to drive the others up on, in the morning ; and one but fitted, as the Gauchos say, to make a perch for a wild bird.

The suffocating north wind blew hot and fatiguing as the Hamsin. On every side a sea of grass, grass and more grass ; “paja y cielo” (grass and sky), as the natives of the country style their favourite landscape.

Nothing to break the brown eternity of the Pampa but here and there a green ombú, shaped like an umbrella, or an occasional straggling line of Pampa grass, which marked the edges of some watercourse, and by comparison seemed as tall as does a poplar in the plains of Lombardy.

An ostrich now and then scudded across our path, with wings spread out to catch the wind, like a ship running down the North-East Trades.

The Overseas Library

Sometimes a Patagonian hare sprang from the grass and lurched, apparently quite slowly, out of sight.

In the district we were crossing, all the rivers salt, and, though as clear as crystal, bitter as gall. The rare travellers, seen from afar, almost hull down like ships upon the sea, grew by degrees larger as they approached, and hat, and poncho, and then saddle and horse came into sight.

When they drew near, they drove their horses all together, and coming forward, riding from side to side, holding their pistol or "facon,"¹ advanced, halted a stone-throw off, shouting their salutations. If all seemed right, they then advanced and asked for news about the Indians; for all the country had been laid waste, the houses burnt, men killed, and women and cattle carried off, about a week before.

¹ A "facon" is a long knife which serves either to eat with or to cut a man's throat (in the slang of the Pampas, "hacer la obra santa").

Un Angelito

It usually appeared that the next house—that is, the one the traveller had left three leagues behind—was smouldering, the body of the owner lying before the door, swollen to the dimensions of an ox, and festering in the sun.

We in our turn related how at the “puesto” five leagues away, close to the pass of the Quequen Salado, we had seen a woman’s body hanging naked to a post, and decorated with leaves torn from a Bible skewered artistically about it where decency required.

With mutual recommendations to have prudence, to beware of smokes,¹ to ride with care, to get off at the little hills which break the Pampa into inequalities, and crawling up to scan the horizon well before descending, we separated with a fallacious “Go with God,” knowing full well our only trust was in our spurs.

Not quite the sort of time that any one

¹ The Indians signal to one another by the smoke of fires.

The Overseas Library

would choose to sleep out on the open "camp."

Towards evening we reached what in those countries is called by courtesy, a fort—that is, it had been once a fort, and therefore had a shallow ditch all round it, and a flat roof, on which reposed a rusty cannon, choking the embrasure.

Around the fort a grove of peaches, known as the "Monte," straggled and furnished a fruit, hard as a turnip, but esteemed a delicacy upon the plains.

A strong corral of posts of ñandubay, all bound together with strips of hide, and a "palenque"—that is, a post to fasten horses to—formed the outworks to the place.

The "palenque" marks the boundary to which the wayfaring man, if not a fool, may safely venture on his horse.

To pass beyond it uninvited, especially at night, exposes one to the chance of a casual shot, or at the least to the assaults of

Un Angelito

a pack of dogs which seize your horse's tail.

Your caballero leaves his horses some way off, and rides up slowly, and still sitting on his horse, calls "Ave Maria!" in a loud voice, to which the owner answers, "Sin pecado concebida," and invites him to get off.

Religion and politeness being thus satisfied, the traveller dismounts, ties up his horse, enters the kitchen, and sits down on a horse's head beside the fire.

The quantity of saddled horses standing outside the house portended something of an unusual kind.

To the "palenque," to the wheels of bullock-carts, to posts in corral, to tufts of grass, to bones half-buried in the ground, stood horses tied.

Every variety of the piebald race was there — "overo negro," "alazan overo," "entrepelado," "overo porcelano," "azulejo," with "tuviano" and "yaguané"—they all were

The Overseas Library

there, looking as bright and variegated as is a bed of tulips in the setting sun.

Some of them merely hobbled by the forefeet, and weighted down with silver bridles, with heavy "cups" on either side the mouth, with silver reins seven feet in length tied back upon the saddles, making them arch their necks like rocking-horses; the saddles silver-mounted, silver their "fiadores" and "pretales," silvered so to speak, like clippers, to the bends; the very rings which formed the buckles of their broad hide girths being of heavy plate. Others, again, were saddled with an old "recado," not worth a dollar (even of Bolivia); a sheepskin on the top, the stirrups merely knots of hide made to be caught between the naked toes. These last sat back on their "Cabrestos" and snorted as you passed them, causing their owners to rush hurriedly from out the house to see if there was danger of their saddles disappearing, and then to mutter, when the horse was quieted, that he was "*medio*

Un Angelito

redomon” (that is, but mounted a few times), “for the accursed infidel had taken all the tame horses and left the ‘pago’ upon foot.” It puzzled me to think why after an invasion of the Indians so many people had come to visit my acquaintance, Eustaquio Medina, known also as Eustaquio el Tejon.

Soon he came out and welcomed me, asking me to dismount, hobble my mare, and carefully tie up a horse, remarking that in the times we lived Christians should take precautions and always live prepared.

The flesh, the devil, and the world were not the things against which Eustaquio thought a true believer should prepare—at least I think so—for, if he ever thought about such matters, he judged most likely it was the business of his priest to shield him from the devil; the world in the Pampas is not too distracting to the mind, and for the flesh he made no struggle, thinking that that which God had made, must of necessity be good for man.

The Overseas Library

After most minute inquiries after the health of all my family, of whom he knew no member, he said—

“We have ‘un angelito’ in our poor house—that is, his body; for his soul is with the blest.”

The conscious pride of being, as it were, in direct touch with heaven itself had caused him to forget his grief for his son's death. No people upon earth can be more absolutely material than the Gauchos of the Pampa, yet one is just as safe amongst them, even in a bargain, as amongst those who analyse their motives and find a spiritual explanation for the basest of their deeds.

Amusements, except ostrich-hunting, cattle-marking, with racing, and others of a nature in which it is not easy for women to participate, are scarce. When a child dies it is the signal for a dance to celebrate its entrance into bliss.

If the Christian faith was really held by anybody in its entirety, this custom would not be

Un Angelito

solely to be observed amongst the Gauchos. As it is, humanity in almost every other country rises superior even to faith, that first infirmity of uninstructed minds.

So in a long, low room lit by a score of candles, made in tin-moulds, and smoking blackly, were assembled some fifty people, Gauchos, estancieros, a Basque or two, and the ubiquitous Italian with his organ, who in those days used to pervade the Pampa from the Arroyo del Pabon to Tapalquén.

The women, known as "Chinas" (Chinese), though none knows why or wherefore, did not err much upon the score of great expenditure in dress—a cotton gown, apparently in many cases their only garment, except their shift—sat, when not dancing, in rows on chairs along the wall, like swallows on a telegraph-wire, waiting as patiently for any man to hire them as the eleventh-hour labourers in Holy Writ.

The "Angelito," dressed in his best clothes,

The Overseas Library

sat in a chair upon a table, greenish in colour, and with his hands and feet hanging down limply—horrible, but at the same time fascinating. Over his head a cheap Italian lithograph of the Madonna hung by a strip of hide from a deer's horn stuck into the wall. On either side a pious and frightful German print, one of the Prodigal amongst his swine, another flanking it setting him forth in better circumstances, seated in pomp between two German ladies, monstrously fair and fat.

Just underneath the "Angelito" sat an old "Gaucha" playing the guitar with the fatuous air with which musicians in countries such as South America invest their trade. Two or three men of the richer classes, as their silver-handled knives and spurs made plain, smoked in a knot apart; whilst in a corner sat some old men talking of horses' marks, and illustrating any difficulty by "painting" the mark in question on the table with their finger dipped in gin.

Un Angelito

The younger people danced "habaneras," "el cielito," the "gato," "manguri," or one of those slow valse with much balancing of hips affected by the South Americans. Evidently they had been drinking to the fair passage of the new angel into the realms of bliss. Above the rasping music the rattle of the dancers' spurs was heard, and now and then the man at the guitar broke into a shrill falsetto song, in which the company took part. Stretched on a catre lay a man wrapped in his poncho, with a deep lance-wound in the groin, given by an Indian a few days before. To keep his blood in order and heal his wound he ate great pieces of beef cooked in the hide, and smoked incessantly.

On passing opposite the body the girls occasionally snatched loose their hands from the clutches of their partners and crossed themselves, and then, as if ashamed of thus indulging in a religious exercise in public, broke into laughter.

The Overseas Library

Why the presence of a child's body, even if its soul is with the blessed, should set on folk to dance passes my comprehension. Yet so it is, and a commercial element has crept into the scheme.

At the country stores, called "pulperias" in Buenos Ayres, sometimes the owner will beg or buy the body of a child just dead to use it as an "Angelito" to attract the country people to a revel at his store.

The pulperia is the Pampa Club, news, calumny and scandal take their rise in it, and there resort all the elite of frontier ruffianism.

One says as naturally, "What do they say at the pulperia?" as in England, "What is the news at such and such a club, or on the Stock Exchange?" An "Angelito" stored in a cool, dark room to keep him from the flies, and then brought out at night to grace a sort of Agape-mone, shows past and present linked together in a way which argues wonders, when they

Un Angelito

both make way for that unfathomable future, the fitting paradise for unimaginative men. From where the custom came, whether from Europe or from the Indians, or if in some form or another it is to be observed in every nation, that I cannot tell: one thing I know, that in the Pampa of Buenos Ayres it and all other customs of a like kind are doomed to disappear.

A cultivated prairie cut into squares by barbed wire fences, riddled with railings and with the very sky shaped into patterns by the crossing lines of telegraphs, may be an evidence, for all I know, of progress; but of all that which makes a Pampa what the Indians imagined it when they gave the plains the name—for Pampa in the Indian tongue signifies the “space”—no traces will be left.

The semi-nomad horsemen will have vanished; the Indians have gone within my memory, leaving, though savages, by their disappearance a blank in the world more

The Overseas Library

difficult to fill than if the works of all the Greeks had vanished into air.

The Gaucho will go next, the ostriches and the huanacos; little by little the plants of Europe, those parasitic prostitutes the nettle and the thistle, which follow us to every climate, will usurp the place of native and more congenial kinds.

His will will be accomplished who, having made the earth a paradise, gave it to us to turn into a purgatory for ourselves and all the dwellers in it.

In this monotony of mud and stucco, through the noise of cabs, of railways and the multitudinous sounds which rob the dweller in a city of any power of hearing, such as wild people have, I sometimes see my "Angelito" seated in his chair, and wonder in what kind of heaven he is. Often I have assisted at a "velorio," and done my best to honour the return of some small angel to his native land. Yet this first occasion on the Tres Arroyos still

Un Angelito

remains most firmly printed in my mind. Eustaquio Medina, the wounded man lying smoking on his catre, the decomposing "Angelito" in his chair, his mother looking at nothing with her eyes wide open, and the wild music of the cracked guitar seem to revisit me.

Lastly, the Pampa stretching away like a great inland sea, silent and bluish under the southern stars; and rising from it the mysterious noises of the desert which, heard and comprehended, appeal to us in the same fashion as the instinct calling them north or south, stirs migratory birds.

THE LAZO

THE lazo is of great antiquity. It is said to be depicted in the ruins of Nineveh. An early Persian manuscript, preserved in the Escorial, shows a sportsman (whom I suppose royal by his Olympian expression and careless seat) in the act of catching a wild ass with a nicely plaited rope. The monarch bestrides a rather stocky-looking, dark-coloured horse, with four white feet and a white face. A bow, quiver and a sabre are hung from his saddle, and a sort of housing half covers the horse. How the wild ass is to be restrained, even by the hand of a monarch, is not at first sight evident, for the lazo is neither fixed to the saddle after the fashion of the Gauchos, nor is a half-turn taken round the pommel, in the style adopted by Vaqueros in Mexico and Texas. Apart from this detail, all is as realis-

The Lazo

tically set forth as it would be to-day in a photograph. The horse bears away from the beast lazoed, and the king sits a little to one side, exactly as a Texan Cowboy or an Argentine Gaucho sits under similar circumstances. Irises and narcissi spring up under the horse's feet, and an applauding group of angels peep out of a cloud, whilst in the middle distance another Persian Gaucho shoots an antelope with an arrow whilst galloping at full speed.

One could have wished that the lazo had been depicted nearer to the ass's head, for hanging as it does, just on the withers, the line of most resistance (so dear to monarchs) has evidently been adopted.

The Laplanders are said to lazo their reindeer, and the Tartars and modern Australians use a rudimentary lazo fixed to a long pole in order to catch wild or refractory horses. The Poles, Croatians, and Wallachians, with the Hungarians, seem to have used the lazo till about the beginning of the present century.

The Overseas Library

A picture by the German artist, Richter, shows Polish remounts for the German cavalry being lazoed in the Zwinger at Dresden. The horses look as wild as a Texan "bronco" ¹ or an Argentine "bagual," ² and the attitude of men and animals, and the way the ropes are coiled and thrown, are identical with those adopted in Spanish America to-day. The lazo appears to run through a ring in the pommel of the saddle.

It is, however, in Spanish America where the art has been most developed. This is on account of the open country and the vast numbers of wild and semi-wild horses which, up to the middle of the present century overspread its plains. The lazo may be said to have two great schools: one the style adopted in the Argentine Republic, and the other what may be called the school of Mexico. The

¹ Bronco=rough or untamed.

² Bagual in the Argentine Provinces is sometimes used for a wild and sometimes for a half-tamed horse. The word is of Quichua origin, and is said to have been originally "Cahual," and to have been a corruption of the word "Caballo."

The Lazo

Argentine Gaucho and the Brazilian of the province of Rio Grande use a raw-hide lazo, plaited generally in four till within about eight or ten feet of the end, where the plaiting is usually of six, eight, or ten strands, as fancy leads. The lazo terminates in a strong iron ring, which is spliced into the hide so as to remain stiff, and stick out in a straight line from the rope. At the end kept in the hand or attached to the saddle a Turk's head and plaited loop form the finishing. The thickness of the lazo is about that of the little finger, and the hide is kept soft and pliable by frequent applications of grease, for which purpose a piece of raw mutton fat is found to answer best. The Indians use mare's grease, but bacon, oil, or any salted grease is said to burn the hide. To make a lazo the hide of a cow is procured, denuded of hair, and the various strands are softened, either by beating with a mallet or being run through an iron ring, or worked between a piece of split

The Overseas Library

wood (called a "Mordaza"). When properly softened, the inside of the hide is as white as flour, and, if well cared for, will last soft for many years. The ordinary length of an Argentine lazo is about sixty-six feet, though exceptionally tall and powerful men sometimes use lazos of eighty and even ninety feet in length.

A skilful man on foot will catch a horse in a corral at the distance of ten or twelve yards, throwing at the neck. At ten yards he will secure the two fore feet, or a fore and a hind foot, both hind feet, or, catching the animal round the neck, will, by imparting a vibratory motion to the rope, place a half-hitch round the nose, thus forming what is called a "medio bozal," or half-halter. To catch the feet is called "pialar" from *pie*, a foot. The effect of catching by the feet is to throw the animal violently to the ground. Catching round the neck chokes the animal to the ground, if enough force is used. In either case, the

The Lazo

moment the lazo tightens, the lazoer throws himself back on the rope, like a seaman hauling on a sheet, and, digging his heels into the ground, bears heavily on the rope with his left hand, which he puts as far behind his back as possible. The strain is most severe, cutting the unaccustomed hand and destroying the clothes, so that in many cases a leather apron is worn to keep off the chafe. A strong colt of five years old will drag three or four men round a corral, if they try to stop him by sheer strength, and the lazo be not tightened high on the neck near the ears; but a boy of sixteen, used to the work, by watching his opportunity, will easily stop the same animal.

To throw a long lazo, height is of great advantage, as, other things being equal, a tall man can throw a longer lazo than a man of low stature. The lazo is prepared for throwing by making a noose from two and a half to four yards in circumference at the ring end of the rope. The ring should be slipped down to

The Overseas Library

about a third of the circumference of the noose. The remainder of the rope is coiled, and two or three coils taken into the right hand together with the noose ; the rest of the coils are held in the left hand. Care must be observed not to leave too much slack rope between the coils in the right and left hands, as it is apt to get entangled when the lazo leaves the hand, especially on horseback. Swinging the noose as many times round the head as is required to give the sufficient momentum, and taking care that the noose flies open and with a slight upward inclination, it is then let go, rather than thrown, when the hand is just above the head on the right side, and slides through the air, uncoiling as it flies.

Like throwing a fly, putting screw on a ball at billiards, and taking a close counter of carte, it is an art not easily described, and best learnt by demonstration and by practice.

To become a perfect lazoer (the Spanish word is *enlizador*), the lazo must have been

The Lazo

familiar to the thrower from his youth. To be able to catch a horse in a corral round the neck, with some certainty, can be learnt in about six months by a young and active man accustomed to athletic exercises.

The lazo on horseback is a very different and far more dangerous affair. Accidents are frequent and often fatal, and the business should not be attempted by any one who has not learnt the art in youth. In all cattle districts, in both North and South America, men maimed with the lazo—having lost either fingers, or a hand, or foot—are as common as “mainsheet men” used to be in seaport towns in the days of “windjammers.”

The lazo on horseback can be used with far greater effect than on foot. From sixteen to eighteen yards is a fair distance at which to catch an animal when going at full speed. The faster the horse is going, the more easily is the rope thrown; and of course the danger increases in the same ratio. The method of

The Overseas Library

casting on horseback is precisely similar to that used on foot. A larger loop or noose (called *armada* in Spanish) can be used, and care must be taken not to entangle the coils of the "slack" with the reins, or to catch the horse's hind legs, or head, or his fore feet, or to touch him anywhere with the rope, unless he is extremely tame and tractable. For this reason a less elevation must be given to the point of the noose, as it gyrates round the head, on horseback than on foot; that is to say, it should be swung almost level round the head before casting. The end of the lazo retained by the thrower is buttoned into a strong iron ring fixed behind the rider's right thigh to a piece of hide about three inches in length, which piece of hide is firmly sewn into the ring of the upper part of the strong hide surcingale which forms the girth of the Argentine saddle.

This saddle is called *el recado*; it is a modification of the old "Bur" saddle of the time of

The Lazo

Charles V., and is known as *albarda* to the Spaniards and *barda* to the Moors. It is composed of several pieces, and surmounted by a rug or sheepskin ; the stirrups are hung long, from the middle of the saddle, and are so small as only to admit the toes. The Spaniards anciently called riding in this saddle "riding *à la brida*" as opposed to the short stirrups and high pommel and cantle of the Moorish saddle, which style of riding was called "*à la gineta*." The Mexican saddle has grown out of this latter style, the stirrups having been lengthened in order to facilitate mounting, and sticking to a wild horse.

When the lazo has been thrown on horseback, and the animal caught round the neck or horns, the difficulty and danger begin. Should the quarry be a wild horse or mare, care has to be taken not to let it cross either in front or behind of the mounted horse. If it does so, there is great danger of a half-turn being taken in the rider's arm or leg, or even a whole turn

The Overseas Library

round his body. The least that can happen is that the mounted horse gets entangled in the rope, becomes frightened, and an accident is almost certain.

Should the animal captured be a bull or cow, the rider must manage to avoid having his horse charged, and for this purpose immediately the noose settles round the beast's horns, the horseman should turn to the near side, *i.e.*, away from the animal lazoed, and endeavour to keep the rope always taut. If he succeeds in doing this, there is little danger of the strongest bull pulling over even a light horse; for it is to be remembered that the weight of the saddle and the rider is an assistance to the horse, as making his weight more nearly equal to that of the bull.

It must not be forgotten that in lazoing on horseback it is the horse that works and holds the animal caught; the rider merely throws the lazo, as no strength of his could hold an animal galloping at full speed. Some horses become

The Lazo

so dexterous that the rider can slip off, leaving them to keep the lazo taut, and, approaching the bull, hamstring it, or kill it by plunging a long knife into its neck.

A high-spirited horse that starts, stops, and turns easily, and does not get too much excited, is the best mount for the lazoer. A low-spirited animal exposes its rider to danger from a charging bull, and an excitable horse is apt to get twisted in the coils of the lazo, or by throwing up its head, or swerving as the lazo is delivered, to make the aim defective. In almost every case the lazo is thrown on the off side of the horse (known from that circumstance in South America as the "lazo side"), but now and then a skilful lazoer will throw to the near side, and, catching an animal, pass the rope over his own and his horse's head, or over the quarters of the horse. This process is always attended with danger, and, as the Gauchos say, should not be attempted by married men.

The Overseas Library

In South America the inhabitants of the Brazilian province of Rio Grande do Sul hold first place for skill with the lazo. After them come the inhabitants of the Republic of Uruguay and the Gauchos of the province of Buenos Ayres.

The Chilians use a slightly different lazo, without a ring, and with a loop and button at both ends. It is twisted in three strands, and known as a "torzal." They are skilful, but, their country being more broken, are inferior to the men on the east side of the Andes.

The second school of lazoers is that of Mexico. There the lazo is never made of hide, but of horsehair or *istlé*, or of the fibre of the aloe. No iron ring is ever used, and the lazo is all one piece, not having an addition¹ spliced on at the end, as in South America.

¹ This addition is called La Llapa by the Gauchos, and is also used by them for a luckpenny in a bargain. The word is said to be of Quichua origin.

The Lazo

Being of lighter material, the Mexican lazo cannot be thrown so far as that of the Pampas. It is more easily carried, however, requires no grease, closes more readily on the neck of the animal lazoed, and neither cuts a horse's legs nor a man's hands so severely as a raw-hide rope.

It is on horseback that the difference between the two schools is most manifest. The Mexican lazo is made fast to the saddle in front of the rider, and hence the difficulty of throwing to the off side is largely obviated; as it is easy to pass the lazo over the horse's head and keep the strain on the rope, and hence far fewer accidents occur in Mexico and Texas than in the Pampas. The Mexican system is, however, less effectual against the efforts of a heavy animal, as, the lazo being fastened to the horn of the saddle when an animal is caught, the rope grazes the body of the rider during the process of the struggle, and it appears improbable that the horse can

The Overseas Library

throw as much weight on to the rope as he can under the Argentine system of fastening. It is usual in Mexico not to tie or make fast the end of the lazo to the saddle, but to take a half-hitch round the horn, and hold the end in the left hand. It is considered very dangerous to tie the lazo to the bow of the saddle, and a man who does so is said to *amarrar a muerte*—that is, to tie a death-knot. Mexicans are very dexterous with the lazo on foot, as, owing to the lightness of their rope, it is very easily thrown. Texans, Kansans, and men of the North-West often use a common hemp rope without a ring or button, but merely tie a bow-line, and pass the coil of the rope through a bight to form a noose. Texan cowboys are often extremely skilful, performing as many feats with the lazo as the Mexicans or Gauchos, but seldom equalling the Brazilians of Rio Grande, who are the smartest men with lazo or bolas, or on a wild horse, that I have seen.

The Lazo

The lazo, with the bolas, the boomerang, the spear, and bow, in a few years will be but memories. Rifle and gun will have replaced or rendered them unnecessary, and the descendants of the wild riders who mounted "bagual" and "bronco," holding them by the ear, and getting to their seats as a bird lights upon a bough, will wait to catch the tramcar at the corner of the street. Therefore this short description may have its interest, being a sort of record of a dream, dreamed upon pampas and on prairies, sleeping upon a saddle under the southern stars, or galloping across the plains in the hot sun, photographed in youth upon the writer's brain, and, when recalled, more vivid than affairs of State which happened yesterday.

THE BOLAS

“THEY have certain balls of stone” (says Hulderico Schmidel in his “*Historia y Descubrimiento del Rio de la Plata y Paraguay*”) “tied to a long string like to our chain shot ; they throw them at the legs of the horses (or of the deer when they hunt), which brings them to the ground, and with these bolas they killed our Captain and the above referred to gentlemen.”

This happened in the year 1585, when the Flemish soldier Hulderico Schmidel fought with the troops of Pedro de Mendoza against the Indians called Querandis, on what is now the site of Buenos Ayres. The captain slain was Diego de Mendoza, brother to the general of the expedition ; the “above referred to gentlemen” figure but as “los seis Hidalgos.” And thus is chronicled the first description of

The Bolas

the "bolas," destined since then to bring down to the ground many a good horse and stag, and even crush the skulls of captains and hidalgos not a few.

Confined entirely to the south of South America, the bolas, like the boomerang, seems to have been unknown to any tribe of savages apart from its inventors. It grew, like other national weapons, from the conditions of the life and country whence it sprang.

The Indians of South America before the Conquest had no horses, so, living on great plains, game must have been most difficult to approach, and when approached consisted chiefly of deer, guanacos, and of ostriches—all animals certain to escape (upon a plain) if slightly wounded by an arrow. Thus an invention like the bolas, which if it touched the legs was certain to entangle, was valuable, as, thrown by a strong arm, it could be used almost as far off as an arrow, was much more easily recovered after a miss, and ten times easier

The Overseas Library

to make. Schmidel describes the weapon accurately when he refers to it as "three balls of stone fastened together by a cord after the fashion of our chain shot." Therefore, it will be seen that the bolas known (for euphony and other reasons) as "las boleadores" in the River Plate stands in the same relation to the lazo as the rifle stands to the ordinary gun.

Such as it is, no Indian, Gaucho, or any self-respecting countryman from Sandy Point to Paraguay, or from the Banda Oriental to Coronel, ever stirs out without at least one pair, either wound round his waist or placed under the "cojinillo" ¹ of his saddle, ready to throw at ostriches, at deer, guanacos, or at the horse of some new-comer to the country which has

¹ "Cojinillo," literally cushion, is the sheepskin or mat of twisted goat's hair, which is placed over the framework of the "recado" (South American saddle); over the cojinillo is placed a piece of leather called a "sobre puesto," and the whole is kept in place by a strong hide sircingle, known as the "sobre-cincha."

The Bolas

escaped and scours the plain, the stirrups dangling to the accompaniment of shouts of "Yá se vá el caballo del Inglés." Sometimes it serves to fight with at a "pulperia,"¹ when the inevitable gin-born discussion as to the merits of the "Blancos"² and the "Colorados" waxes hot.

Bolas for general use are made of two stones about the size and weight of billiard balls, and of another about half the size and egg-shaped. All three are shrunk into bags of hide known to the Gaucho as "retobas." Each ball is fastened to a string of twisted hide about the thickness of a pencil, and three feet in length.

¹ Pulperia is a country store where everything is sold, and where sardines, figs, bread, raisins, and "vino seco" or "Carlón," with square-faced gin, comprise the menu. The bar is defended by a strong grating, and the "pulpero" stands behind with his revolver and a pile of empty bottles ready for what may happen.

² "Blancos" and "Colorados" are the Ins and Outs, and they are as hard to distinguish as are two black stones, or as the obsolescent political protoplasms known as Whigs and Tories.

The Overseas Library

The three are fastened in the middle like a Manxman's legs, so that the length from the hand ball to the two large balls does not exceed six feet, and the whole weight is not above a pound. For horses, wooden balls are used, and to catch ostriches, little balls of lead not larger than a pigeon's egg, fastened to strings of rather greater length than those I have described.

The Indians in the south of Patagonia sometimes use a bola made of a single string and with a ball attached, with which they strike and kill wild animals, as pumas, jaguars, and guanacos. The instrument is called "bola perdida," and, of course, cannot be used to take an animal alive, as it does not entangle but merely stuns the animal it strikes. At other times they use a single string with but a single bola and a hand ball, as being easier to throw, lighter to carry, and much easier to make, but it does not wind round the legs so firmly as do the bolas of the common shape. To throw the

The Bolas

bolas, they are whirled round the head and circle through the air with the two heavier balls close beside one another, and when launched turn round and round on their own axis in their flight, and break in like a "twister" from the leg side, and if the strings strike on the legs of any animal, the motion of the bolas being stopped, the balls wind round and round and tie the animal as firmly as would a pair of hobbles. The heavier kind may (on a good horse) be thrown from fifty to seventy yards, the balls for ostriches nearly one hundred, and the single "bola perdida" a hundred and twenty yards and even more, according to the strength of the man throwing and the speed at which the cast is made. On foot, as with the lazo, much of the power is lost, though as a general rule the cast is made more accurately. When thrown the bolas are extremely hard to get away from, and the best plan is to run towards the thrower and lie down flat upon the ground. If the man thrown at tries to run away his

The Overseas Library

chance is small, and even if armed with a revolver the odds are much in favour of the "boleador," especially if he has several pairs of bolas, as, at the distance of fifty to sixty yards, the pistol rarely does damage if the object at which the shooter aims is moving rapidly about; the fact of motion is of no consequence to the man who throws the "balls," their length giving such a wide margin upon which to work. The bolas are easier by far to learn than is the lazo, and the danger far less great; for as the bolas leave the hand when thrown, the only danger lies in the possibility of catching your own horse's legs, in which case it is probable he will start bucking "fit to knock down a town," and the unlucky thrower get a violent fall and rise to find his horse either with a leg broken or else scouring the plain with his new saddle, and himself afoot.

An average horseman and a cricket-player should learn the bolas in three months' practice, though to excel (as with the lazo) the "boleador"

The Bolas

must have begun as a mere child, and have "balled" and "lazoed" chickens, cats, and dogs in order to acquire the skill of hand the natives of the Pampas enjoy with both. Such is the weapon (well greased with mutton fat) with which the Gaucho and the Indian fight, catch wild horses, deer, and ostriches, and with which their forefathers caught the horses of the soldiers of Don Pedro de Mendoza, and their grandfathers the artillerymen of the unlucky expedition under General Whitelock, the flags of which still hang in Buenos Ayres in the Cathedral aisle.

In the vast territory of the Southern Pampa, which stretches from Bahia Blanca to Sandy Point, and from Puan to Nahuelhuapi; in the green prairies that reach from Buenos Ayres to the Sierra de Vulcan, upon the park-like prairies of Entre Rios, and the vast rolling steppes of Rio Grande, and again amongst the apple forests of the Andes, the bolas are the chief pleasure, weapon, and plaything of the Gaucho

The Overseas Library

of the plains. His habits, speech, and mode of life Azara first made known to the futile world which reads and writes, and thinks because it reads it knows, and to whose eyes the Pampa with its signs, its lore, its disappearing customs, its low horizons, flat-topped ombús, rivers and wastes, Guadal¹ and Biscacheras,² its flocks of ostriches, its cattle without number, herds of wild horses, whirling tero-teros, and its lone ranches, is a closed book. Nothing so pleasant in this machine-rid world as to bestride a half-tamed horse upon the Southern Pampas, and, well armed with several pairs of ostrich bolas, accompanied by two good greyhounds, to go upon the "boleada"—that is, to start out ostrich hunting with several well-tried friends, and with a "caballada" from which to take a fresh mount when the horse ridden tires. The

¹ "Gaudal" is a marshy tract of ground; the word comes from the Arabic "guahal," mud.

² Biscachera; the biscacha is an animal somewhat resembling the prairie dog of North America. The best description of the biscacha is perhaps that of W. H. Hudson in his "Naturalist in La Plata."

The Bolas

Patagonian ostrich (*Rhea Americana*) frequents the stony uplands which so fascinated Darwin, and of which he said that all the wealth of vegetation of the tropics had not made so deep a mark upon his mind as the wild plains, the solitary huts, the lonely camp-fires where the dogs kept watch, the horses eating, tied with their green-hide ropes, and he lay smoking, wrapped in his poncho, looking at the stars. Whether in Patagonia, or on the rolling plains of brown and waving grass which stretch from the Romero Grande to Tandil, the ostrich goes in flocks ranging from ten or twelve up to a hundred or even more. Scudding across the plains before the wind, their wings spread out to catch the breeze, it takes a well-trying horse, with his utmost efforts, after a gallop of several miles, to bring a man within a bola's cast. The hunters range themselves in a formation like a fan, and try to join the outside edges of their ranks and get the ostriches into a circle, or else to force them into marshy ground on which

The Overseas Library

they cannot run, or up against the margin of a stream, edge of a wood, or border of a precipice. Sometimes the birds scatter and break up into groups, and then the horsemen, whirling their bolas round their heads, bound over stones, rush through the mia-mia, thread through the scrub, and, with wild cries, incite their horses and their greyhounds to full speed. Ponchos stream in the wind, hair flutters, silver spurs rattle upon the raw hide girths, and now and then a horse, stepping into a "cangrejal,"¹ rolls like a rabbit, its rider seldom failing to alight "parado"—that is, on his feet—and, holding the long reins or halter in his hand, to rise before his horse, and mounting, when it regains its legs, straight to resume the chase.

To go upon the "boleada" is the chief ambition of every Gaucho of the south, and so that he can make enough to keep him in cigars and gin, to buy a new silk handkerchief or

¹ "Cangrejal" is a piece of ground undermined by land crabs (*cangrejos*).

The Bolas

poncho now and then, no chance that he will hire himself for any settled work. Yet many of the "boleadores" die at their trade, either at the hands of Indians, by hunger or by thirst, or, failing to alight "parado" after a heavy fall, are left on foot with a limb broken, to die alone amidst the ocean of brown grass, from which no man left wounded, without a horse, escapes alive. Most of the frontier soldiers who, in the last two generations, themselves half Indians, have forced the Indians back into the wild valleys of the Cordillera of the Andes, have been "boleadores."

The couriers, who used to ride from Bahia Blancas to Patagonia, passing the Rio Colorado, and getting across the "travesia"¹ as best they might, all learned their desert lore in the pursuit of ostriches. Perhaps Bahia Blanca was the centre of the "bolas." Game was abundant,

¹ Travesia = a crossing; it is generally used in the River Plate for a tract of desert country between two fertile districts.

The Overseas Library

cattle mostly wild, Indians swept often in their "malones" ¹ over the settled lands, and the wild people known as "Badilleros" had a deep-rooted and most logical objection to all continued work. Even the lazo was too troublesome, and so they lived even less comfortably than did the Indians, raising no crops, shivering in wretched mud and straw-thatched huts, with a horse-hide for the door, eating no bread, and with a saddled horse tied night and day outside the house. Their conversation was all of horses, brands, fights with the Indians, feats with the "bolas"; of such a one who, on his journey to some place, was set on by the "infidel," and crossed the Rio Colorado with a pair of bolas on his horse's legs; of such another who, carrying the mails, lost the road, and was discovered lying dead on his exhausted horse, his last act having been to hang the mail-bag on a tree.

Such as they were, a hardy race—now

¹ "Malon" was the word used by the Gauchos for an Indian raid.

The Bolas

passed, or passing fast, into oblivion—more savage than the Arabs, only a step advanced beyond the Indians; tall, lean, long-haired, hospitable, and thievish, abstemious as Icelanders, and yet as very gluttons as an Apache at a dog feast; born almost on their horses, sitting them like centaurs, living amongst them, talking and thinking but of them, and shying when they shied, as they had been one flesh. I see them, as I saw them years ago, out on the “boleada,” riding towards some “pingo”¹ paradise, twisting “las tres Marias”² round their heads, bent just a little sideways in the saddle, as, at full speed, they plunged through the pajonales,³ flitted across the stony wastes, sped through the oceans of brown grass, and disappeared out on the Pampa as a ship slowly sinks into the shadow of the world upon the sea.

¹ “Pingo” is the Gaucho word of praise and endearment applied to a fine horse.

² “Las tres Marias,” *i.e.*, the “Three Marys,” a euphuism for the “Bolas.” It is also used for the three bright stars in Orion.

³ Pajonales, *i.e.*, canebrakes or thickets of Pampa grass.

S.S. "ATLAS"

IT was a filthy autumn day in New York, with Fifth Avenue looking more than usually vulgar under the leaden sky, and the streets carpeted with rotting plane-leaves, as I drove, jolting over the rough cobblestone, to a wharf near Dubrosses Ferry to go on board the *Atlas*. The s.s. *Atlas* was a type of ship well known in the Seventies, but now obsolete. In those days the "tramp" had scarcely made its appearance, and the liner was less frequent and less gorgeous than at present.

Vessels long, iron-built, flat-sided, and coffin-like, of the *Atlas* type held an intermediate position. They looked for cargo where it might be reasonably expected, and took pas-

S.S. "Atlas"

sengers to whom a long passage, rough food and poor accommodation were rendered indifferent through lack of means. The American agent had informed me that the fare from New York to Glasgow was £10, and that the vessel was a Scotch boat, in which I should find Bible and whisky, and might expect to be in Glasgow in twelve days, if (so the agent said) the Lord was willing and the Scotchmen did not overdrink themselves. I had no deck-chair, the decks were an inch deep in coal-dust, and the vessel went to sea at once. Leaving Sandy Hook we encountered the full force of a north-easterly gale, and I (the only passenger) retired at once to my athwartship bunk, to be miserable and endeavour to read the "Faerie Queene," my only book, and the only book on board except a Bible and a bound-up volume of the "Reaper" and some professional works. For weeks, as it appeared to me, it was "Burley Banes," rattle of ropes, racing of screw, banging of my portmanteau as

The Overseas Library

it washed to and fro in a foot of water in the cabin, groaning of timbers, roaring of the wind, bellowing of the Blatant Beast (in the "Faerie Queene"), shouting of the boatswain, pattering of naked feet upon the deck; then a fitful dozing, broken but by the rare visits of the steward with a "cup of arrowroot and whisky, sir," to tell me everything was battened down, and that the skipper had been sixteen hours on the bridge and looked like Lot's wife when she enjoyed her last wistful glance at Sodom. Air stifling, lamp smoking, drops of moisture on every plank, a continuous dropping of water on to my pillow, rats running across the floor, a dense, steamy feeling which made one sleepy, crumbs of biscuit in the bed-clothes, a futile tin basin floating in the cabin, a brandy-bottle propped between a Bible and a sponge in the fixed washing-stand, guttering candles swung in gimbles, decks which seemed to rise and hit one in the face when staggering out in the rare intervals of the storm, to see

S.S. "Atlas"

yards of bulwarks swept away, feeling one's way between the seas, clutching a life-line to the engine-room to listen to the yarns of the chief engineer, a Greenock Ananias of the first water, and bushy bearded as befitted one who had "gone out in '47, second engineer aboard the craft what took out Rajah Brook." Then back to bed, wet through, and back into a trance between sleep and waking, more brandy, arrowroot, more "Faerie Queene," more stifling, and the vessel labouring so heavily that when the copper cargo shipped at Copiapo shifted on the fifth day out, it seemed she lay almost upon her broadside in the sea. And still I liked the voyage, and even took a pride in knowing we had sighted Rockall, hoped in my heart of hearts we should sight Iceland, and yet was miserably seasick all day long, and all night long lay half awake, meditating on the adventures of Sir Satyrane, of Britomart, Parlante, and the Faire Florimell, and all the other characters of Spenser's master-

The Overseas Library

piece, who in some curious way seemed to become connected with the ship.

After the seventh day no cooking, galley fire put out and steward staggering in drunk, with a Bible in his hand, white-faced and frightened, "rubber" sea-boots on, and plate of cold salt horse and biscuit, and, of course, more whisky ; fitfully came the strains of " Renzo " as the crew set the fore topmast staysail, and in my berth I learned how " Reuben Renzo " shipped aboard a whaler, " Renzo, boys, Renzo," heard his adventures, cruel treatment by the mate, and was most interested to find that for a change his virtue had its reward at last, and at the present time " he was the skipper of a sugar droger." Weeks seemed to pass, and on a day the Captain, clad in dripping oilskins, looking in for a moment with a speaking-trumpet in his hand, deigned to impart the information that we had a slant of wind, and though the smoke-stack had fetched loose, he reckoned to make Cape Clear, "damn his eyes,

S.S. "Atlas"

forgive him, God, for swearing," in a few hours.

Now floated down to me the cheering melody of "New Orleans," with its inspiriting chorus of, "Yah yer, ho, roll and go," and somewhat inconsequent but Demosthenic envoy of "Hell to yer soul, is it tay that ye want?" as the crew "set sail to steady her," as my familiar the steward, having discarded whisky, fear, and Bible, for the nonce, and bearing hot sea-pie came in to say.

At last on deck, with Rathlin Island on the starboard beam, steaming towards the Mull; a great sea change, no boats, bulwarks all washed away upon the weather side, doors torn off the hinges, the "fetched loose" smoke-stack, coated white with salt, and stayed up in a clumsy fashion with some chains; rigging a mass of tatters, halyards flying loose, the jack-staff gone, the Captain haggard and red-eyed, the officers all cheerfully profane, the crew going about like men after a long debauch,

The Overseas Library

but cheerily, as hauling in the main sheet they bent their backs, taking the time from a Long Island fisherman who did not pull the value of a cent, and hauled together, keeping time to the innumerable verses of that old-world lyric of the seas, "Tom's gone to Hello." The Mull and Pladda, Lamash Island, Cloch Lighthouse, and the winding river with its fairway marks, Dumbarton Castle, and Dumbuck, Elderslie House, and at the last the Broomielaw ; black decks again, and then I step ashore in "Glesca" to find it "Sawboth," and be asked by the pious whisky-seller, where I essayed to change a sovereign to pay my cab, if I was sure I was a "bona feede traveller."

Ten days flew past at home with theatres, dress-clothes, good dinners, and the unaccustomed feel of comfort, so strange to those who but a week ago have been the inmates of a tramp. Ten days amongst the faces, once so familiar, but which to-day may look quite strange if we should meet in limbo, purgatory,

S.S. "Atlas"

or wheresoever it is the souls of travellers pass their appointed time. Ten days and back again upon the Broomielaw, rain, fog, and coal-dust, and the lights of whisky shops glaring like ogres' eyes upon the crowd, decks filthy, crew either half drunk or else disabled by disease; the skipper sulky, mates thinking about home and surly, the boatswain almost inaudible through a bad cold, and the poor draggled drabs upon the shore looking like animated rag-shops in the December gloom. Scuffling and cursing, creaking of blocks, throbbing of the screw, and then the vessel slides out into the foul-smelling, muddy drain they call the Clyde, slips past the shipyards, passes Blythswood, leaves the Cloch astern, runs past the Cumbræes, where the minister once used to pray for the adjoining islands, England and Ireland; leaves Pladda on the weather side, begins to dip and roll and sends me to my bunk to lie half stupid, torpid, a prey to nausea and foul smells, till the throbbing

The Overseas Library

ceases, the heaving and the pitching stop, and going upon deck I see the sun and find that we are anchored in the Garonne under a vineyard, and about a mile outside Pauillac. Here we intended to take in emigrants for the River Plate, the vessel, during her ten days' rest in Glasgow, having been whitewashed down below and fitted up with tiers of bunks after the fashion of those vans in which sheep make their railway journeys, and just as comfortable. Visions of tugs coming sweeping down the yellow stream, crammed thick with people, all with Basque caps and carrying bags, bundles, and the inevitable bird-cage, without which no emigrant embarks. Glimpses of garboard strakes, as the tide sets the steam launches round, and the emigrants rush to one side chattering in Basque; clattering of donkey-engines worked by a grimy "greaser," and recollections of an interminable song about "Oh mariniers, bons mariniers, à combien vendez-vous votre blé?" sung by black-haired

S.S. "Atlas"

and red-sashed men, working the cargo under the direction of a much-bejewelled stevedore. Then all the emigrants crowd down below, kissing takes place, men hug their sweethearts, to wed whom they are going foreign, and hope in ten years' time when they return with dollars to find constant, unimpaired in virtue and in face, with the same figure which the dim but treasured photograph sets forth. A bell rings and the quartermasters clear the ship, the friends who go ashore holding their handkerchiefs, dirty with tears, to their red eyes; the friends on board waving their greasy hats, and neither trying in the least to keep their feelings in, but weeping lustily after the primitive and natural fashion which relieves a man and makes him feel that tears wash out his grief, rendering him happier than those whom education, custom, prejudice, or what you will, have forced to face their misery with dry eyes.

So past the Tour de Cordouan, and, after,

The Overseas Library

Lisbon, where again the ship took in another freight of human cattle, this time chiefly peasants from the Galician hills, who emigrate *en masse*, leaving their villages deserted and the houses closed, for wolves to scamper through the deserted streets on winter nights. Then out into the "roaring forties," followed by a rising gale. Hell down below amongst the emigrants, and no one on board who could speak French or Spanish, still less Portuguese, except the wretched reader of the "Faerie Queene." So through those alley-ways I weltered sick to death, when difficulties rose, and jabbered with the unlucky peasants, who bore their sufferings manfully, sitting on the deck all jammed together like sardines, from the grandmother to the new-born infant, and almost every family hampered with a great wicker bird-cage, though they were going to a land of parrots, macaws, toucans, humming-birds, cardinals and flying spots of jewelled rainbow, compared to which the birds of Europe all

S.S. "Atlas"

seem made of sackcloth or of mackintosh; but were not Abana and Pharpar superior to all the waters of Judea? But it seems natural to man upon a journey to impede himself with all the living things he can, and to trail draggled birds, bound in their wicker servitude, beyond the seas. As he could not free man, body or soul, by all the strength of prayer and of example, St. Francis perhaps did well to open bird-cages and set their inmates free whenever he got the chance; at his beatification, had I been there I should have urged against the arguments of the Devil's Advocate, this fact, and pled that every rookery about the place, all larks, quails, pigeons, thrushes, blackbirds, linnets, and starlings should have had a chance to register their vote. And then the gale subsided, and the old semi-tramp lurched at nine knots before the following seas, till in a day or two we struck the north-east trades, carried them fair and light, and woke one morning in the dream

The Overseas Library

world of sapphire sea, clear sky, and flying fish darting before the ship, Portuguese men-of-war on every side of us; warm air, a feeling of content, a heavy roll, sails flapping against the rigging, now and then filling with a jerk as if they would tear out of the bolt ropes, in fact, the magic of a fine day in a low latitude not to be represented to the mind by a curved line and straggling lettering, Tropic of Capricorn, as in a map. Like a white cloud we sighted Teneriffe, fully thirty leagues away, passed close to Santa Cruz, left Lanzarote on our lee, coaled at St. Vincent, passed under San Antonio rising a piece of Africa lost in the sea, and then headed across the ocean towards Brazil. Christmas Day caught us somewhere: no doubt the longitude and latitude is still recorded in some forgotten log-book with the due "observations" and "remarks:" but we were Scotchmen and recked but little of such Erastian festivals, although the emigrants performed a sort of

S.S. "Atlas"

mutilated mass upon the deck, a Biscayan schoolmaster mumbling his mystery from a prayer-book and the faithful gathered in a crowd a little aft of the fore bitts, whilst the West of Scotland crew pushed through them now and then to trim the sails or make their way into the fore-castle. At times a perspiring fireman emerged out of the stokehole, a "sweat rag" round his neck and lump of waste in his black hands, to breathe and see the show, sat looking for a minute as if the worshippers had been a tribe of savages, and then climbed down his ladder backwards, just pausing for a moment as his head sunk below the coaming of the hatch to mutter something of an uncomplimentary nature on the Whore of Babylon.

Days followed starry nights and we began to know each other, and the officers and men having emerged out of their oilskins, and the watch and watch duty which made them north of 40°, so to speak, fenced off from the mere

The Overseas Library

landsmen and oppressed with work, they now began to take a patronising interest in the passengers and to chat freely with the emigrants, their deep-sea dignity laid on one side, perhaps because they could unbend more safely as no other sailors were about. The captain, who since then has risen to command big ships, to be commodore (I think) of a great line of steamers, and to retire upon his well-earned pension and laurels to Blackheath, to bore himself consumedly on shore, and to regret the days, no doubt, when he commanded the s.s. *Atlas*, was a pious, blaspheming Scotchman, built as it seemed to last for ever, hardy and wise, beard like a scrubbing-brush, quick-tempered and good-hearted, a perfect seaman of what I may term the transition school, having served all his early life in "wind-jammers," but "sceenteefic" in his way, and able, above all, to deal with a scratch, rough, skulking crew such as we had on board. The mates indefinite, all Glasgow men, well educated, reading

S.S. "Atlas"

"improving" books ; one of them with a master's certificate, and all so boorish in demeanour that till you knew them it appeared that they were mad. Much is forgiven to North Britons, for they have drunk much, but why they should think that rudeness shows independence is not so clear, for above all men in the world they are the first to see a slight intended to themselves. The boatswain and quarter-masters were all Englishmen, two of them old men-of-war's men, careful and tidy as old housemaids, and often in their watch off, on a fine night, I saw them washing their clothes amid the jeers of the Scotch crew, "who did not hold with it," and thought that water had only one use, to mix with whisky, and that that use was only made of it by fools, by weaklings, and by Englishmen. At night I sat and yarned with them, tried unsuccessfully to learn to splice, thinking the art might turn out useful in mending lazos, listened to their jokes and forgot most of them, but still remember something

The Overseas Library

about the "*Mary Dunn*, of Dover, a brig (I think) wot went to sea with three great bloomin' decks and 'ad no bottom." The crew appeared to be composed mainly of costermongers with a stray seaman here and there, 'longshoremen, and an occasional West Highland fisherman. The doctor (brother of a well-known portrait painter), who perchance may smile when he reads this, informed me that their habit was to come on board blind drunk, without a kit except a new jack-knife and new sea-boots, to pitch the latter down the fore peak and fall themselves upon the top of them, lie prostrate for a day or two, and then get up and ask him for "black-wash," of which he kept a mighty store, knowing the medicines by experience which were most likely to be useful in their case. The fishermen were quieter and had sea-chests, good stocks of clothes, and were sailors in a fashion, all having made a trip or two at sea. When sails were hoisted they always got close to the block, "lifted the shanty," yo, heave, ho! and

S.S. "Atlas"

made as if they were about to pull like oxen, but stopped there, and if some three or four of them had clapped on to the same rope the sail would never have been set in the whole watch they pulled so "cartiously."

The Spanish and French emigrants were mostly Basque, all wearing "boinas" and "alpargatas," speaking dialects of the Basque tongue quite comprehensible to one another, and yet hating each other to the full as much as Irish and English, merely because an arbitrary line ran through the mountains where they all were born. A long thin Bordelais called Pierre, but known as "Monsieur Pedro," because he spoke a little Spanish, ruled them like slaves, and when they fought knocked them about till they were quiet, at times coming aft to ask for medicines from the doctor with a grave face, often explaining with some detail that a woman was apparently ill with fever, but that he (Monsieur Pedro) thought that was untrue, and "the dam woman really make too much love." But this

The Overseas Library

love or fever to the doctor were all one (perhaps they are to every one) and Pierre used to go off contented with a seidlitz powder and two pills. At night the emigrants danced to the strains of an accordion, sang "me gastan todas" to the guitar, or joined in chorus to the eighty verses of an old southern French song, known as "La Blonde," a damsel who was beloved by all "Les Chasseurs," but who incontinently flung herself away upon "a braconnier," perhaps because as the chorus used to set forth "Les braconniers sont dangereux et nombreux,"—but why spy into the motives of a poacher and his wife?

The great Scotch festival found us off Fernando Noronha, the little island off the coast where the Brazilians had a penal settlement. The day broke hot, and as we passed the island it loomed low, the palm-trees standing in a sort of mirage so that they seemed to have no roots and float above the land like parasols, between the sand and sky.

How the crew got the liquor no one ever

S.S. "Atlas"

knew, but before twelve o'clock the ship was like a pandemonium or the east end of Glasgow on a fast-day night. From the stoke-hole came the sounds of "Auld Lang Syne," the watch on deck were stupid, and the emigrants scattered before them like chickens before the gambols of a large Newfoundland pup. Just when the skipper came on deck, his sextant in his hand, ready to shoot the sun, a man walked up to him and said, "Hoo are ye, Captin? Ye ken although my feyther aye sat under Dr. Candlish I'm a deevil wi' the lasses, and so are ye yirsel." The captain who, since early morn had been boiling with fury, growled like a bear, told the man roughly to go forward and lie down, received an insolent reply, then knocked him down, and had him put in irons, then carried to a spare cabin and locked in, where he continued to howl "Auld Lang Syne" until he fell asleep. But by this time the decks were filthy, men falling down and sick all over them, the mates and engineers working like slaves, punching and

The Overseas Library

kicking, driving the drunken crew below, until at last they were all got into the fore-castle, and a man planted at the door armed with a hand-spike to keep them in.

The day passed rather awkwardly, for though a special dinner had been prepared, a list of toasts drawn out, haggis and cock-a-leekie duly prepared, no one could eat it, for, till night fell, the mates, the passengers, doctor, purser, and such of the emigrants as were able were forced to work the ship ; the doctor and myself steering occasionally and putting the helm invariably hard up, when it should have been put hard down, keeping the vessel yawing about as if we wished to write our names upon the sea. Next morning decks were washed, black eyes and broken heads attended to, the prisoner let out on promise of amendment, and a search made to find how the men had got the drink. Nothing, of course, came out, and we pursued our voyage, touching at Rio, and half-way to the Plate ran into a Pampero, which kept us out a

S.S. "Atlas"

day, till one fine morning we sighted Lobos, slipped past Maldonado, left the English bank upon our lee, passed close to Flores Island, and anchored finally just underneath the "Mount." The Neapolitan who rowed me to the shore said that the *Atlas* looked to him like a coffin, but having spent so long aboard of her I cursed him for a fool, told him the blood of St. Januarius would never liquefy if he went on like that, and turning saw the skipper leaning on the rail waving his hat and calling out "So long; don't forget New Year's Day." I said I would not, and the *Atlas* passed out of my life, and what became of her only the underwriters could possibly have told. Perhaps she was broken up for scrap iron, lost on a well-known shoal, sold for a tramp, and may be dodges about between the Islands of the Chinese Seas, if she has not long ago foundered in the night after the fashion of so many of her class.

But anyhow my copy of the "Faerie Queene" still smells of cockroaches, is spotted on the

The Overseas Library

cover with salt water, some of the leaves are foxed, the title-page is lost, and when I open it even the music of " Epithalamion " is dumb, and in its stead I hear the swishing of the sea, feel the screw racing and the long-drawn-out notes of a " forebitter " seem to quiver in the air, until I shut the book.

BRISTOL FASHION

FROM Mogador to Mossamedes runs a line of coast which from the time of Hanno to the present day has been the wonder and the despair of men. There barbarism has had its last entrenchments ; even to-day some of them still remain unstormed.

Cannibalism, missionaries, “*feitiço*,” “*gri-gri*,” the gorilla, gold dust and ivory, the negro race, great swamps, primeval forests, stretches of barren sand, leagues of red earth as at King Tom, bar harbours, “*factories*,” beads, amulets, the slave trade, Liberia ; the curious names of places, as Bojador, Bissagros, Portendik, with Jella Coffee, Fernando Po and Annobon, St. Paul’s, Loanda, Half - Jack, and Ambrizette, form a strange hell - broth of geography,

The Overseas Library

ethnology, fauna and flora, superstition and religion up to date, remnant of the pre-wages era, republic of the type of Gerolstein, an animistic fugue of barbarous music, in which "Marimba," war-whistle, and tom-tom all bear their part.

First, Mogador, called Sueira (the picture) by the Moors, almost an island, dazzlingly white, confined to Africa but by a rope of sand, kissed by the North-east Trade, and looking ever out on Lanzarote, towards which it seems to sail. Then Agadir, once Santa Cruz, and held by Spain, and now deserted but by some families of Jews and a few wandering Arabs, and then the country of the Troglodytes, whose caves remain, but from whose hills the warlike dwarfs described by Hanno have long disappeared; next the Wad Nun, the Draa where Arabs, mounted on their "wind-drinkers," chase ostriches and speak the dialect of the Koreish; then Cape Juby, and from thence to Bojador, the Cape known as

Bristol Fashion

the world's end till Gilianez, with Zarco and Tristan Vaz, passed to the Bay of Garnets, and claimed the land for Spain.

Edrisi, Ibn Batuta, with Leo Africanus and Ibn-el-Wardi, and before them Herodotus, Polybius, Procopius, and historians Roman, Arab, and Greek, have left accounts of some sort or another, down to the Senegal; but that they knew the land south of Cape Palmas is not made out. They tell us of vast deserts, burning sands between Cape Barbas and the Senegal; all this we know, and little more to-day, for, from the sea, the eye surveys the sand unbroken but by a palm-tree here and there, an Arab Duar, and now and then a rider on a camel, or a troop of ostriches.

Now by degrees the country changes, and great woods appear joining the mangrove swamps which fringe the coast and run from Bathurst, Sierra Leone, past the Grand Sesters, Piccaninny Sess, Cape Palmas, Accra,

The Overseas Library

Acasa, through the Gold Coast, where a white vapour hangs over everything and obscures the sun as it were covered with fine gauze. Passing Fernando Po, which rises from the sea, an offshoot from the mountains of the Cameroons, past Annobon, the Congo, St. Paul's, Loanda, and Benguela, the dense bush continues till by degrees the vegetation grows more sparse, and below Mossamedes, after having passed more than two thousand miles from Mogador, again the land gets sandy, arid, and sub-tropical.

During the Sixties, along the coast laden with rum and gin, with gas-pipe muskets long as a spear and painted red, brass dishes, musical-boxes, trade powder, cheap German clocks and French indecent prints (as presents for the chiefs), beads, bells, and looking-glasses, well "sized" cottons, and all the other glories of our time and state with which we push the gospel truths, extend our trade, and bring the "balance" of the world under

Bristol Fashion

the shadow of our glorious flag, ran barques, all owned in Bristol, usually about five hundred tons, all painted chequer-sided, sailing short-handed out of Bristol, and at Cape Palmas shipping a gang of Krooboys for the cruise.

Between Cape Mesurado and Cape Palmas the Krooboys have their towns, the Little Kru, the Settra Kru, King Will's Town, and the rest. A race apart, the Lascar of the coast, the Krooboy for the last two hundred years has been in intercourse with men from Europe, and still remains a worshipper of gods which, in the latitudes of Aberdeen, of Sunderland, the Hartlepoons, and other regions where the true faith reigns, are not accepted. A healthy pagan, tall, active, with muscles like a Hercules, head like a comic masque, speaking a sort of "petit negre," or "Blackman English," a jargon, call it what you like, the groundwork of it oaths; his face tattooed on either temple with a triangle, from which a line of blue,

The Overseas Library

which starts below his hair, runs down his nose, giving him when he laughs a look of having two distinct faces. The Krooboy ships for a cruise, and then, on his return to the five towns, reverts to paganism; a merry misbeliever, over whose life no shadow of the Galilean tragedy has passed, and who, therefore, ships aboard an English ship in the firm expectation of returning home after a two years' cruise to invest his wages in the purchase of more wives, two hundred years of missionary labour having as yet proved ineffectual to eradicate the natural polygamistic tendencies which Providence (who one supposes acted after due consideration) seems to have planted in the fibre of all mankind, except, of course, ourselves. Strong, tall, a coward, animistic to the core, and called indifferently "Jack Beef," "Sam Coffee," or "Small Fish," the Krooboy is a man apart, and for the test of moral worth our Christian navigators put a bale weighing two hundredweight upon his

Bristol Fashion

head, and if he carries it safe through the surf, he is engaged.

Of all the barques none was considered smarter than the *Wilberforce* owned by the Messrs. Fletcher, commanded by one Captain Bilson (Honest Tom Bilson), a man who knew the coast by day and night, each harbour, inlet, mangrove swamp, and knot of palms, as the Lone Palm, Three Palms, the "Carpenter," and the rest from Sherboro Island to Kabenda Point.

"Honest Tom Bilson" all the traders called him with a laugh, and by the various chiefs he was best known as "Blistol Fassen" from his constant using of the phrase. "Ship-shape and Bristol Fashion" was his word, and after pouring out a stream of blasphemy at some unlucky Krooboy stowing a sail, he used to raise his eyes to heaven and exclaim, "Oh, Lord, Thou knows my 'eart, but these 'ere Krooboys make me peril my immortal soul ten times a day!" for Bilson was a member

The Overseas Library

of a congregation in the rare intervals he passed at home, and even when at sea, on Sundays, read his chapter to his crew, not greatly understanding what he read, but reading, as he heaved the lead, took in top-gallant sails at night, or purged his crew on entering low latitudes, from sheer routine. Of course he had a wife at home legally married, or, as he said, "wedlocked" to him in a chapel; but matrimony, I take it, does not bind much below the "roaring forties," so in his cruises up and down the coast, when he had shipped his Krooboys, having no gift of tongues, he also shipped a negro girl to act as an interpreter and keep things "ship-shape" in his cabin, sew on his buttons, play on the "marimba," and act as intermediary in his dealings with the chiefs. This was the "fassen" of the coast, and in Accra a sort of seminary existed to train, instruct in English, and turn out young negro girls for "the profession," which was held an honourable and

Bristol Fashion

lucrative estate. These damsels, known as "consorts," used to affect great state and dignity, wearing their clothes so stiffly starched with arrowroot that, had you cut their legs off, still their skirts would have maintained their balance by sheer force of starch.

Aboard these trading barques the life was easy, running down the coast from town to town, for then the skippers seeking a cargo did the work which now is done by hulks, and got their cargo here and there, picking up palm-oil, camwood, ivory, gum copal, kola nuts, beeswax, gold dust, and ostrich feathers on the barter system, in direct dealing with the headmen of the towns. To-day upon the coast the days of "seeking" are long ended, for hulks in every river collect the country produce, and the captains of the "tramps" who take it off see little more of native life than what is seen by sailors all the world over, that is the "tingel-tangel," gin-shop, and

The Overseas Library

haunt of low debauchery, but in those halcyon days a captain of a barque shared with the missionary and the head trader of the "factory" the chief position of the unofficial white man from Cape Palmas to the Bights.

Pleasant it was to drop into some river where no trader lived, signal for a pilot to the chief, and either in his hut or in the cabin of the ship "set up a trade," after a long palaver where cases of gin from Rotterdam formed the chief arguments. Although the barques carried no guns, still they had arms aboard — muskets and cutlasses, which the skipper used to keep in his own cabin under key. At times the captain used to land, and with a guard of men and squad of Krooboys carrying merchandise (that is, of course, gin, rum, and powder, with trade guns), proceed to interview some chief in his own house. Then palm-wine flowed, tom-toms were beat, the negro women danced after a fashion which even at the Moulin Rouge would not be tole-

Bristol Fashion

rated, presents were exchanged, and a great banquet was provided and discussed in the chief's own room, generally furnished with three or four iron beds, a cuckoo clock, two or three musical-boxes, and on the walls either religious pictures setting forth the Prodigal's Return, Rebecca at the Well, the Ark, or else French prints, all of the most superlative degree of "pornographickness." At least such was the furniture in Jella Coffee, *regnante* King Jo Tay, who with his consort Margo used to provide the skippers of the passing ships with yams and sweet potatoes, palm-wine and bananas, and send off canoes crammed to the gunwale with that special feature of his land, the "Jella Coffee runner." On shore at "factory" and port the straggling European population struggled with fever, fought with gin, lolled half the day in hammocks, imported horses from the Gambia, only to see them die within the year, talked of the old country, occasionally got up a prize-fight borrowing

The Overseas Library

the missionary's steam launch when necessary to run the fighters into native territory. Flies and mosquitoes made life miserable, men took the fever overnight, were dead by morning, buried at gunfire, and none seemed happy but the "snuff and butter" coloured children, who swarmed in evidence of the philoprogenitiveness of the members of what Mr. Kipling calls "the breed." No nonsense about Bilson, "shipshape and Bristol fash," and "treat a bloody nigger well if he works well; and if he kicks, why then speak English to him," was the burden of his speech. Philanthropists, with missionaries and those who talked of equal rights for all mankind, he held as fools, calling them "bloomin' sentimentalists," which term he thought the most contemptuous a man could bear, and fit for landsmen, swabs, and those who sailed out of the northern ports in brigs and schooners, and all those mariners who had not attained to the full glory of a Bristol barque.

"I like a naked nigger" (he would say)

Bristol Fashion

“dressed in his breech clout,” but the self-same “nig” rigged in a cheap slop suit he thought unnatural, and asked with many oaths, and tags of Scripture referring to the Amalekite dwellers in Canaan and the Cities of the Plain, if you would like to give your daughter to a negro man. This not infrequently produced unpleasantness, for no missionary, philanthropist, or any other man, no matter what he thought, had ever answered with a downright “Yes.”

Then Bilson used to triumph and call for drinks, sweetening his gin with orange marmalade, and calling to his “Accra girl,” tell her to dance, just in the way that Vashti should have danced had she not shown the proper spirit that has caused her to be handed down as an example to all self-respecting wives, in the immoral legend where the loves of Esther and Ahasuerus are set forth. After much rum, his “consort” bit by bit took off her stiff-starched clothes and stood half-naked ready to dance

The Overseas Library

after the manner known as "Bonny Fash," a "Fash" which has its merits even compared to the gyrations of the half-naked, perspiring spinster at a London Ball. And whilst the negress danced to the accompaniment of a tom-tom and a flute, bending about her body like a snake, imparting that strange rotatory motion to the pelvis which so charms the Eastern and repels the moral Western man (accustomed as he is to London streets at night), waving her arms about in phallic gestures, turning her eyes back till the pupils become almost invisible, brushing against the knees of the spectators as a cat arches his back against a table-leg, Bilson would talk with tears in his eyes of home, about his wife, his children, and his wish they should attend good schools, his daughter learn the piano, French, dancing, and the mysterious things which make a girl a lady "all the way up" (as Bilson used to say), and that his son through the gradations of a mortarboard, college degree, and, what was

Bristol Fashion

necessary, become at last what his proud father styled a "blarsted gentleman."

Men's minds are built in reason-tight compartments, and what they do but little influences them, for the real life we live is one of thought, and it is not impossible even that in a brothel the mind may still be pure.

Honest Tom Bilson cared not for speculations, but acted in the manner he called practical, that is, he tried to square his conscience with his life, except when personal interest, hate, love, or any other human passion intervened. After the fashion of most common natures, he hated to be overreached, and if a "nigger" was the overreacher his fury knew no bounds. Seated in the caboose over his "okross" stew, which, as he said, reminded him of a fat eel well-stewed in glycerine, sipping his gin and talking to his mate (the Accra girl listening as solid as a joss), the chart spread on the table marked with rings where cups of cocoa had been set

The Overseas Library

upon the paper, the picture of his wife dressed in her best silk gown with brooch large as a cheeseplate pinned on what he styled her "boosum," glancing down at him from the wall, his Bible and revolver handy, his naked feet in carpet slippers, shirt-sleeves rolled up, the scuttles open, and the ship anchored outside the bar of a small river, his boatswain came below and told him in a report garnished with oaths that several of the Krooboy's had stolen a boat, and having crossed the bar, had paddled up the river and disappeared. Now Bilson knew that to recover boat and "niggers" was beyond his power, for in the little native town no white man lived, and native chiefs never give up a man who seeks protection, but plunder him themselves, and make excuses saying, "Nigger, he no lib', gone into bush all the same turkey, we no catchey he." To quote the boatswain, "You could have shovelled out the blasphemy with a tin sugar-scoop, and the whole 'droger' seemed alight from stem to

Bristol Fashion

starn." To lose a boat upon the coast meant money, much inconvenience and the impossibility to get another till he arrived at Cape Coast Castle, Accra, Sierra Leone, or some considerable port. This did not move him near so much as the bewildering thought that he, the smartest skipper on the coast, had been outdone by his own Krooboys, "niggers," savages, heathens, and yet sharp enough to leave him in the lurch. The "palaver" which he held lasted till early morning; almost a case of "Palm-tree Brand" was finished, and when the sun at last broke through the heavy mist which in the tropics heralds day, and when the tree-frogs chirping like cymbals woke the echoes of the heavy-flowing tidal stream, mate, negress, and the boatswain lay asleep upon the cabin floor, and only Bilson sat erect, his head quite clear, his resolution fixed, and taking down his Bible, assured himself that eye for eye and tooth for tooth was God's own law, then went on deck.

The Overseas Library

Having got "Scripture for it," Bilson would stick at nothing, and he knew that Kroomen stranded ashore far from Cape Palmas had but one course of action if they wished ever to see their native land again ; that was, to sell the stolen boat and ship aboard the first returning vessel they could find : and this returning vessel Bilson resolved with many oaths should be his own.

The dog watch saw him almost hull down, and when in five days' time about six bells, the vessel entered the river from the eastward, she had suffered a great change. The chequer sides were gone and a red stripe replacing them caused her to look much higher, the cherished figurehead setting forth Wilberforce in the act of benediction, the joy of Bilson's heart, was out of sight, cased up in canvas and painted black, so as to scarcely show apart from the body of the ship, and a few heavy weights moved further aft gave her a different set. The square yards on the mainmast all

Bristol Fashion

had disappeared, and she presented (to a Krooboy's eye) the appearance of a Yankee barquentine sailing from Portland, Maine, and to make all things right the Stars and Stripes flew from her peak, and, as she anchored Bilson came on deck, dressed in white drill, a broad Bahama hat, his hair dyed black, moustache cut off, and beard and whiskers trimmed to the goatee shape which, in those days, bespoke the Yankee, in the same way as the full-shaped beard was held to be the trademark of the "limejuice" Englishman.

As Bilson had expected, a canoe put off, and, as it neared the ship, one of the missing Krooboys, known as Tom Coffee, hailed and asked, "'Spose Massa Captain want Krooboy, Tom Coffee, Little Fish, Joe Brass lib' for ship one time." And Bilson answering in an exaggerated New England accent that he was short-handed and was going north, the unsuspecting Krooboys ran their canoe under the vessel's counter and came on board. As each

The Overseas Library

man stepped on deck a heavy blow stretched him half-senseless, and he recovered to find himself in irons and listen to Bilson pouring out his rage in all the choicest phrases of the dialect of Sierra Leone, "You damn niggers, you tief ship boat, eh, you think you better man past Captain Bilson, eh, I tell you wash 'um belly, no see Cape Palmas dis one time," and calling to his boatswain he had the three poor wretches thrown into the hold upon the cargo, the dunnage of it being logs of camwood, every hole of which harboured a scorpion, a centipede, or mangrove crab, which, if you crushed it, sent forth a scent worse than a Chinese stinkpot, a tanyard, slaughter-house, or fashionable lady smothered in the newest perfume made from the dross of tar.

His "niggers" well secured, Bilson weighed anchor, and, sailing down the coast, ran into a small river that he knew, from whence Brazilian slavers shipped their "rolls of tobacco," and, backing his foreyard, lay to, going himself well

Bristol Fashion

armed in his own whale-boat to call upon the chief. Late in the evening he returned, and with him came a war-canoe manned by some sixteen savages all with their teeth filed to a point, with collars of leopard's claws, armlets of ivory, and armed with spears.

The wretched Krooboys, gagged and tied hand and foot, were dumped like logs into the war-canoe, and Bilson, after hauling in his boat, braced round his yards, and slipped into the night.

Years afterwards, when seated in his villa outside Bristol, after attending chapel, the Sunday dinner done, grog on the table, churchwardens alight, and feet in slippers, the sermon well discussed, the chances of the next election of the town council all talked over, his "wedlocked" wife and daughter having retired, Bilson was wont to tell how that in all his life he had been done but once and that time by some "bloody niggers;" but he would say, "They stole my boat, they did ;

The Overseas Library

their names was Little Fish, Tom Coffee, and Joe Brass, stole my boat, eh, but by Gawd's help I ketched 'em and sold 'em to a chief of one of them cannibal set-outs of niggers down Congo way ; fixed 'em, I did, you bet, in Bristol fashion."

TANGER LA BLANCA

GIBRALTAR melts away, taking the outline of a sleeping lion, the peaks above Gaucin stand out as clearly as if cut out of cardboard, and on the other coast, Ape's Hill in Barbary rises up like a gigantic sugar-loaf.

Pillars of Hercules, Gibel Tarik, and Gibel Musa, Gate of the Road, the "Puerta del Camino" of the mediæval Spanish chroniclers, they still remain guarding the entrance to the great salt lake around whose shores all that was interesting in art and science of the ancient world, arose and fell.

From Gibel Musa, Tarik embarked on his adventure, one of the three or four in which whole peoples have engaged, and, landing on the other outpost of the then known world, overran Europe, and had his progress not been stayed but by an accident we might to-day

The Overseas Library

have heard the call to prayers arise in Aberdeen. From Gibel Tarik, after eight centuries of peace and one of bitter persecution, the Morisco remnant of the once conquering Yemeni hordes embarked, leaving the land which cast them out, priestbound and slothful, and the poorer by their loss.

Next, Algeciras, the green island (El Jezirah el Hadara), from which it takes its name, lying athwart its harbour like an enormous whale. Coasting along La Tierra de Maria Santisima, with Africa on the port bow, one wonders which of the chosen lands, that of the Blessed Virgin or that of Sidna Mohammed, looks most inhospitable. On both sides mountains, all clothed with arbutus, dwarf rhododendron and the kermes oak, run to the water's edge. On either side the isolated farms are low, flat-topped, and white. The population both in Spain and Africa is pastoral, and flocks of goats and hairy sheep are tended, in Spain by a brown, wool-clad figure with a sling, and

Tanger la Blanca

on the other coast by a white-robed statue armed with a sword-shaped club, bare-footed and bare-headed, and standing listlessly to watch the steamer pass, unmoved except perhaps to curse the strange "maguina" made by the Frank. From both the goatherds floats a song as wild and quavering as a heron's scream, taught to them both by their remote and common ancestor from Hadramut. Almost awash, the ramparts of Tarifa rise, then, bit by bit, the crenelated wall, the Castle of Guzman el Blanco, identical, unchanged from that May morning when the Moorish Caid exposed the Christian captain's son upon the ramparts, promising his life, if but the father would consent to raise the siege, and upon his refusal hurling the headless body of the boy into his camp. Tarifa, the most African of all the towns of Spain, let Ronda, Cuenca, Granada, Niebla, Huelamo, and the white city, on the hill in Aragon called Arcos de Medina Celi, all contest her claim. Houses intact as when their

The Overseas Library

Moorish owners left them; the gate of the town a horseshoe arch with due inscription, setting forth God's name in the linked characters of Cufa, which he loves. Outside the "noria" revolves, turned by a woman and an ass, palm-trees and canes, with Azofaifa, Ajonjoli, and Albahaca grow—all introduced, as Abu Zacaria tells us in his "Book of Husbandry" from farthest Nabotha. Lastly Las Tarifeñas, dressed in their curious straight mediæval petticoat, their black lace veil covering their faces all except one eye; which custom, had Mahommed ever foreseen, theirs would have been the greater punishment—that is, of course, when the Believers held the town; but what if Christians fall into the Tarifeñas' snare and, as the people say, drown in their eye, he takes no heed. Tarifa sinks into the sea, and the sandy plain through which the Guadalete runs, and where Don Roderick lost the land, God having given the victory to the Moors (the embraces of La Caba having

Tanger la Blanca

detained him too long in the north), appears but for a moment and then sinks like Spanish glory with a long struggle, into the blue haze. Through the white tide-rip, which in old times must have been as a Syrtis to the banked galleys as they floundered through ; under Cape Malabat, on which a Moorish Atalaya stands, guarding the coast with three old Spanish guns of brass prone on the ramparts, for the carriages have long ago been used as firewood, or have mouldered into dust. Under its semicircle of low hills, the houses on the Marshan standing well out against the sky, Tangier appears, the Alcazaba dominating the old white town. Palm-trees spring from the courtyards, no smoke curls up to spoil the atmosphere, and the mosque tower in the centre of the place reverberates the sun from its green tiles, the light flashing and turning iridescent on them as on the scales of some gigantic lizard's back. Row after row of flat, white houses, like an interminable terrace, con-

The Overseas Library

stitute the town, all so distinctly seen in the clear air, that from the steamer's deck you fancy you could step from house to house, and from the last descend into the realms of the Arabian Nights. But thirteen miles from Europe, as the gull flies, millions of miles away in feeling, and in life. Tanger la Blanca, Tangier the white. Whitewash and blinding sunlight on the walls ; upon the beach, white sand ; the people dressed in robes of dusky white, a shroud of white enfolds, a mist as of an older world hangs over it, coming between our mental vision and the due comprehension of the secret of the place. The town is old enough, God knows, older than London. Goth, Spaniard, Portuguese, Greek, Roman, Arab, and Carthaginian have fought for, conquered and possessed it (or it them), have left it, some have disappeared, their very countries knowing them no more, but still the city stands, enduring sun, dust, rain, wind, the lapse of time, neglect, and still but little changed from when Count

Tanger la Blanca

Julian held it for the empire of the Greeks. Since Tarik sailed out of its port to conquer Spain is but a day in its existence. Ibn Batuta left it and wandered up and down the world for thirty years, visiting Persia, Irak, and Malabar, and penetrating to that strange land where, as he tells us in his "Travels," he found even amongst the dwarfish, yellow Djin-descended men, some friends of God. Then, tired of travelling, he returned to write and muse, and found the place, as he himself relates, unchanged; then died, and we may hope that Allah gave him rest at last, after his wanderings. But thirteen miles from Europe and yet less spoiled with European ways than is Crim-Tartary. Nothing has changed for centuries. In the narrow streets the porters stagger under burdens, swaying and shouting "Balak!" as they go; the water-seller, with his great skin bag, brass cup and bell, winds in and out amongst the crowd; women, all swathed in haiks, pass silently along,

The Overseas Library

to meet their lovers, to the bath, to gossip with their friends, or sit in rows to tell their troubles to the reader in the mosque.

Othman, Ali, or Sidna Mohammed himself, appointed Friday to be the women's day, and so it has continued, for time, rightly considered, but sanctifies that which itself is good and goes some way to make mankind endure even the most intolerable of ancient customs and of modern laws. As in the time of Jacob, women draw water from the well, the camels rest beside their burdens in the market-place, the grave-faced men sit selling trifles squatted in their little shops, whilst round the public writers covering their yellow slips of paper stand knots of people wondering at their skill, for writing of itself has something sacred which attaches to it, for all believers know the Cufic alphabet was sent direct from God. The rich man perched, all swaddled up in fleecy clothes, upon his pacing mule, his house secured and wives locked up, the key which guards their

Tanger la Blanca

virtue stuck in his waistband, rides down a cobbled street, under an archway, along the beach, and then entering an aloe-planted lane comes to his garden, then dismounts and meditates or sleeps, perhaps reads the Koran, the verses of el Faredi, or perhaps does nothing, and returns home content. The poor man lounges all day about the streets, prays at the stated times, dozes and prays again, then sleeps face downwards in the courtyard of the mosque and is contented with all Allah sends, if bread be not too dear. The beggars sitting at the gate, flies settling on their sores, blind, maimed and scrofulous, ragged and filthy, yet are all content, for hath not Allah made all kinds of men—rich, poor and outcast, Caids, Governors and Sheikhs, sailors and camel-drivers—and all to praise his name? It may be that the entirely materialistic view of life conduces to content.

Again the mind of man perhaps can grasp the idea of a single God with greater ease than it can grapple with the Trinity. Still it is so :

The Overseas Library

the sun, the sound of running waters and the hum of flies, the clear white light, the unchanging life—all seem to satisfy, and after all is not a palm-tree, with its leaves hanging quite listlessly against the trunk, perhaps more restful to the eye than is an oak, shattered and twisted, its branches swaying and tossing in the never-ceasing storm? Content and ignorance, delight in life, tears, joy and laughter unrepressed, the simple faith, few wants and no ambition—all conjoin to make the place as unlike Europe as it is possible to be. The Arabs tax us with our miserable looks, say we are all in terror of ourselves, afraid to be alone, and that we need no hell to punish us for lack of faith after the life we lead. It may be so, and that a group of horsemen flying on the beach, their horses' manes and tails streaming like seaweed in the wind, their clothes all fluttering out, firing their long, curved guns and calling on God's name, is just as pleasing as a group of gray-clad men, even though educated, who pass their

Tanger la Blanca

lives in turning out sized cottons by the piece or an infinity of water-closet handles.

If in Tangier a man is owner of a horse, a wife or two, a camel or an ass, what does it matter if from the coast to Fez it takes a month to ride? When he gets there at last, he sells his bale of calico, packet of leather, or his box of spice, and after selling sleeps as peacefully as if a train had whirled him there in sixteen hours, packed like a sardine in a third-class carriage and obliged to plan to cheat his fellows against time. What matter if, to go a little lower in the social scale, a man has but a donkey and one wife, a little plot of land, or water-melon patch, and goes to market pushing, so to speak, his ass in front of him with all his merchandise perched on its back, singing the while in a falsetto key, if he is free from care?

So thinking of such things, my mind sometimes go back to the white Arab town sleeping as peacefully as it has slept for ages, and looking out on Europe with an air of wonder

The Overseas Library

tempered with contempt. And I am glad that the chief industry is intermittent, leaving full time for meditation and for faith ; for all you have to do, is heap your orange-peel, dead cats, and any offal you can find, in an esparto basket and sling it on an ass, then drive him gently to the beach, unload, and after a due interval has passed, replace your basket, shout " Arranemook ! " and then begin again.

A SURVIVAL

TO be a Scotchman nowadays is to fill a position of some difficulty and trust.

It is expected that when he takes pen in hand that he must write, no matter what his predilections, antecedents, or education may have been, a language which no Englishman can understand. It is in vain to plead that all our greatest writers in the past have written in what they hoped was English.

Hume, Smollett, Thomson, and Sir Walter Scott, with Dugald Stuart and Adam Smith, endeavoured to make themselves intelligible, even to Englishmen.

Dunbar, the greatest poet that Scotland has produced, wrote in a language but little differing from that of Chaucer, who, by the way, he styled his master, acknowledging him to be of "Makkaris Flowir."

The Overseas Library

Bishop Douglas did not translate Virgil into the rough jargon of the peasants of his day.

Master Robert Henryson, the author of "Robin and Makyne," one of the few pastorals tolerable to those who do not live in towns, is almost as easy of comprehension as is Spenser.

Drummond, of Hawthornden, rarely uses a Scottish word. Carlyle, it is true, made himself a language after his own image in which to express his philosophy, but neither language nor philosophy seem likely to endure, and future generations may yet remember him but as a humourist.

Burns occasionally "attempted the English," but his success in that language was not striking, and a man of genius is neither subject to rules, nor can he usually found a school to carry on his work.

Be all that as it may, the fact remains that the modern Scottish writer to be popular in England must write a dialect which his reader cannot understand. If novelists north of the

A Survival

Tweed must live (and write), they must perforce adopt the ruling fashion, if possible be clergymen and treat entirely of weavers, idiots, elders of churches, and of all those without whose aid, as Jesus, son of Sirach says, no state can stand.

Now, though I have but little skill of the jargon which these Levites have invented, let no Southron think that I depreciate the worthy folk of whom they write. They are all honourable men (I mean the Levites), and if it pleases them to represent that half the population of their native land is imbecile, the fault is theirs. But for the idiots, the precentors, elders of churches, the "select men," and those landward folk who have been dragged of late into publicity, I compassionate them, knowing their language has been so distorted, and they themselves been rendered such abject snivellers, that not a henwife, shepherd, ploughman, or any one who thinks in "guid braid Scots," would recognise himself dressed in the motley

The Overseas Library

which it has been the pride of kailyard writers to bestow. Neither would I have Englishmen believe that the entire Scotch nation is composed of ministers, elders, and maudlin whiskified physicians, nor even of precentors who, as we know, are men employed in Scotland to put the congregation out by starting hymns on the wrong note, or in a key impossible for any but themselves to compass.

England to-day looks at a native of North Britain from a different standpoint from that of half a century ago. In the blithe times of clans and mosstroopers, when Jardines rode and Johnstones raised, when Grahams stole, McGregors plundered, and Campbells prayed themselves into fat sinecures, we were your enemies. In stricken fields you southern folks used to discomfit us by reason of your archers and your riders sheathed in steel. We on the borders had the vantage of you, as you had cattle for us to steal, houses to burn, money and valuables for us to carry off. We having

A Survival

none, you were not in a state to push retaliation in an effective way.

Later, we sent an impecunious king to govern you, and with him went a train of ragged courtiers all with authentic pedigrees but light of purse. From this time date the Sawneys and the Sandies, the calumnies about our cuticle, and those which stated that we were so tender-hearted that we scrupled to deprive of life the smallest insect which we had about our clothes. You found our cheek-bones out, saw our red hair, and noted that we blew our noses without a pocket-handkerchief, to save undue expense. You marked the exiguity of our "Pund Scots," our love of sixpences (which we called saxpence), and you learned the word "bawbee." So far so good, but still you pushed discovery to whiskey, haggis, sneeshin, predestination, and all the other mysteries both of our cookery and faith. The bagpipes burst upon you (with a skirl), and even Shakespeare set down things about

The Overseas Library

them which I refrain from quoting, only because I do not wish to frighten gentlewomen. Then came the road to England that we chiefly used, all others in our country being but fit for partridges, but that well worn and beaten down, just like the path to hell. King George came in, in pudding-time, and all was changed, and a new race of Scotsmen dawned on the English view. The '15 and the '45 sent out the Highlander, rough-footed and with deer-skin thongs tied round their heads, dressed in short petticoats and claymores in their hands, they marched and conquered and made England reel, retreated, lost Culloden, and the mist received them back. But their brief passage altered your view again, and you perceived that Scotland was not all bailie, prayer-monger, merchant, and sanctimonious cheat. By slow degrees we rose from mosstrooper and thief to impecunious courtier, then became known as pious business men, ready to cheat and pray on all occasions, but still ridiculous, as those

A Survival

who have no money must of necessity appear to richer men. Our want of wit amazed you, for you did not know we wondered at your want of humour, and so both of us were pleased.

Then Scott arose and threw a glamour over Scotland which was nearly all his own. True we were poor, but then our poverty was so romantic, and we appeared fighting for home and haggis, for foolish native kings, for hills, for heather, freedom, and for all those things which Englishmen enjoy to read about, but which in actual life they take good care only themselves shall share. The pale-faced Master and the Highland chief, the ruined gentleman, the smuggler, swashbuckler, soldier, faithful servant, and the rest, he marked and made his own, but then he looked about to find his counterfoils, the low comedians, without whose presence every tragedy must halt.

Then came the Kailyarders, and said that Scott was Tory, Jacobite, unpatriotic, un-

The Overseas Library

presbyterian, and that they alone could draw the Scottish type. England believed them, and their large sale and cheap editions clinched it, and to-day a Scotchman stands confessed a sentimental fool, a canting cheat, a grave, sententious man, dressed in a "stan o' black," oppressed with the tremendous difficulties of the jargon he is bound to speak, and above all weighed down with the responsibility of being Scotch. I know he prays to Gladstone and to Jehovah turn about, finds his amusement in comparing preachers, can read and write and cypher, buys newspapers, tells stories about ministers, drinks whiskey, fornicates gravely, but without conviction, and generally disports himself after a fashion which would land a more imaginative and less practically constituted man within the precincts of a lunatic asylum before a week was out.

All this I know, and I know virtue which has long left London and the South still lingers about Ecclefechan, hangs about Kir-

A Survival

riemuir, is found at Bridge of Weir, and may yet save us when England is consumed with brimstone, as were the Cities of the Plain. But I object to the assumption that the douce, pawky, three per-centling of the kailyard has quite eclipsed the per-Culloden type. In remote places it still remains in spite of education, kodak, bicycle, cheap knowledge and excursion trains ; it lingers furtively without a reason, but perhaps that of disproving Darwinism. The men who named the hills, the streams, the stones, who hunted, fished, and fought, who came out of the mist, who followed like dumb, faithful dogs, the foolish Stuarts, and fought against the brutal Hanoverians to their own undoing, have now and then a type lingering pathetically and ghost-like from the dim regions of a pre-commercial age.

All that still lingers from another age is what we call a ghost—a ghost perhaps of happier, freer times, when men were less tormented about little things than we who

The Overseas Library

live to-day. Even in Scotland there still exist some few remains of the pre-Knoxian and pre-bawbee days, though fallen into decay.

Not far from where I live there dwells a worthy man, Scotissimus Scotorum, a Scot of Scots, enriched by sweating of some sort, but still a kindly soul. Kindly, of course, in everything but trade, which is a thing apart and sacred, semi-divine, sent straight from God, and like divinity, the teinds, baptismal regeneration, and hell-fire, quite beyond argument. A Liberal, of course—that is, a Liberal wishing to drag down all men over him—a Tory of the Tories to all below him, but yet a kindly, worthy wealthy, and not intolerable man. A moralist, if such a thing there be, thinking all sins but fornication venial. A teetotaler—that is for others—but himself taking at times his glass of whiskey for the reasons which have been so cogently set forth by St. Paul the Apostle to the Caledonians. My friend lives in a house to which is joined a small estate called Inver-

A Survival

quharity. Now, though a Radical, nothing rejoices him so much as to be designated territorially as Inverquharity, and to give out he is third cousin to the Earl of Bishopbriggs. These inconsistencies give zest to life and go some way towards redeeming even North Britain from the load of dreariness which Kailyarders depict. One of the themes the worthy ex-sweater, now turned bonnet-laird, delights to dwell on is, that race has little influence upon a man. For take (he says) a Highlander and place him in the same conditions as a Lowland Scot, and he at once alters his mode of life, becomes industrious, and soon assimilates himself to those with whom he dwells. Nothing so difficult as to discuss such questions with my worthy friend. What the true Scotsman wants is argument, and it angers him as much if you agree with him as if you argue and confute his argument. If you agree you are a hypocrite, and arguing shows your narrow-mindedness, so that the safest is to say

The Overseas Library

nothing and be thought a fool. Talking one day he broached the theory that the crofters of the Hebrides were really fond of work, and that their idleness arose from lack of opportunity. "See," he remarked, "in Manitoba how they improve in new surroundings, and without a landlord to rack-rent and oppress." All landlords, in my friend's opinion, are rank tyrants, and though he likes to meet them individually, even to dine with them if they have titles, in the bulk they are accurst. Of course there is no tyranny in trade, and if a strike takes place, why who so loud as he to call for extra police, to write for soldiers, and to complain that magistrates are weak, and that a whiff of melenite is needed just to clear the air?—for commerce, as all know, came down from heaven, took root in Glasgow, and never can do wrong.

Talking of earls and dukes, and of the shameless immorality of countesses, the iniquity of game laws (though he himself pre-

A Survival

serves), stakes in the country and the state of trade, the villainy of servants, the rate of illegitimate births and other things on which men placed as he is placed delight to dwell, he asked me if I knew a farm known as the Offerance. I knew the spot, a little croft with hideous little house, four windows and a door, with slated roof, and with two spruces ragged with the wind which sweeps across our favoured land on either side the "toun." A little garden, in which grew "berries," as we style gooseberries and currants, and those sub-acid apples and plums which flourish in the north. A barn, a byre, and a horse mill, with its mushroom-looking top and four wide openings, contrived on purpose to give the horses cold when resting from their work ; and over all that air of desolation which the lack of flowers and neatness with the excess of wind and rain impart to Scottish farms. Withal not ill-appointed, the fields well-drained and top-dressed, the fences in repair, the gates well

The Overseas Library

painted, and the whole place a thrifty, ugly, wire-fenced, and necessary blot upon the land. Though a small holding nothing was done by hand, crops were scientifically dropped from machines into the ground, and then the harvest ready, as artfully manœuvred out, so that the acme of rural dulness and town desolation was attained.

The tenant of this paradise was just about to leave, and Inverquharity announced that he was going to put his theory of environment into immediate execution, to get a crofter family down from the Hebrides to occupy the place. It seemed to me that if he must have Islanders, he might as well have got them from Tahiti as the Hebrides, but still I held my peace.

Time passed, and Inverquharity and I drifted apart, and Offerance, crofters, and theories of rent escaped my mind. Riding one day to visit a hill farm, I passed the Offerance. It looked a little unfamiliar, and seemed to have

A Survival

passed into a different state. Outside the door a fire of peats was burning, on which a kettle, hung to three birchen poles, essayed to boil. Before the fire two ragged children sat, searching each other's heads as diligently as they had both been scriptures. A different air of desolation brooded on the place. The fences were all broken, ground untilled, and little zig-zag paths traversed the fields where short cuts had been made. The gates were off their hinges, lay on the ground or had been burnt, and in a gap a broken cart stood jammed into the hedge. The stock was not extensive, and reminded one of that one sees outside an Arab's tent, or Indian wigwam, mangy and full of ticks, and with the bones protruding through the hidebound skin. Two skinny ponies, with their feet hobbled with withy ropes, which left the flesh all raw, were feeding on the weeds. Some Highland cattle and a goat or two, some scabby sheep, a pack of sheep dogs and a lean, miserable cow, comprised the lot, and left

The Overseas Library

me wondering if the owner ever expected to pay rent, or looked upon the Offerance as a fee simple given to him by Providence on which to put out all his agricultural lore, and teach the natives the Ossianic mode of carrying on a croft. Close to the house a tall, athletic man, half drunk (but not so drunk as to have lost his wits), wrapped in a plaid and leaning on a stick, his fell of rough black hair descending to his small grey eyes, stood looking at a woman and a girl planting potatoes after the method known in the Highlands as the "lazy bed." That is, instead of ploughing, you dig lightly with a spade, turning the turf a little over on one side, then put in the potatoes and rearrange the turf. The plan is excellent, and saves much work, manure is not required, or sweat of brow, and the soil is exhausted almost as quickly as a crofter can desire.

To see and understand took me but little time, and mentally I said, "This is the crofter family which my worthy friend has brought."

A Survival

On my horse fidgeting the man looked up, came to the road unsteadily, and tried to seize my reins, then, taking off his hat, poured out a flood of compliments, all in the Gaelic tongue. I on my part caught a word here and there, learned he was glad to see me, and understood nothing particular, except the word "Tigh-earnas," which he repeated at the end of every phrase. It means a chief, and is used by Highlanders as gipsies use "captain" on a racecourse when they wish to flatter or delude. The rain poured down, and he stood there bareheaded, talking and talking till I thought I should go mad. In a mixed jargon of broken Gaelic, and that sort of idiot English that we use to make our meaning clear to foreigners, I asked him to put on his hat and not to be a fool. He answered, "Neffa," and though I found that he knew English pretty well, he beckoned to his wife to act as his interpreter.

"Donald," she said, "is out of Wester Ross,

The Overseas Library

he does not like the digging, but Inverquharity is pleased with him, for he puts up such a bonny prayer." This with the sing-song accent which all Highlanders affect.

Knowing the species, I was sure digging and ploughing, and every form of man-ennobling work, was not his style, and asked why he stood bareheaded, and if he liked the place.

"Och, aye," he said, "Offerance of Inverquharity is a pretty place, and a vera pretty name it has itself whatever."

Strange as it may appear, the uncouth syllables sounded quite different when pronounced by him. His wife, continuing, informed me that Donald never put on his hat when talking to one he thought a "chentleman," and though he cared but little for hard work, he was a "pretty gamekeeper," and a first-rate man to beat.

The semi-sacrament of whiskey-money having duly passed, I rode away amongst a

A Survival

shower of what I took for blessings in the Ossianic tongue.

Turning I saw the Offerance through the rain, black but uncomely, ragged and wind-swept—a picture of the old-world Scotland, which has almost disappeared. Sloth was not altogether lovely, but prating progress worse.

I might have left the place quite discontented even with mankind had I not recollected that the world is to the young, and noted that the children's diligence had been rewarded, and that one was handing something to the other with quite an air of pride.

HEATHER JOCK

TO differ from the crowd, whether as a genius, an idiot, a politician, or simply to have a differently shaped beard from other men, will shortly be a crime. At present, out of pure philanthropy for ourselves, we seclude our madmen in prisons euphemistically called lunatic asylums. In the East the madman still walks the streets, as free as any other man, and gives his judgment on things he does not understand, like any other citizen. True, in the East there generally is sun, and every evil with the sun is less.

There is no sun in Scotland, but not so long ago our semi-madmen and our idiots philosophised about the world, taking the bitter and the sweet of life in public, just like the rest of us. The custom had its inconveniences ; but, on the other hand, perhaps, was just as

Heather Jock

merciful as that which to-day shuts up all harmless, foolish creatures within four walls to save the sane the pain of seeing them.

What reasons influenced William Brodie, bred a weaver at the Bridge of Weir, in Renfrewshire, to first turn pedlar, or, as we say (Scoticé), "travelling merchant," and from that to transmigrate himself into a wandering singer and buffoon under the name of Heather Jock, are quite unknown. The status of a Scotch Autolykus has, no doubt, charms. We do not look on pedlars with the disdain with which in England the trading class is viewed. Rather, we honour them for the use we have of them, knowing the Lord created them for some wise purpose of his own not yet made plain. Hucksters and merchants both are prone to sin, and as a nail sticks fast between the joinings of the stones, so sin sticks close between selling and buying : at least so Jesus son of Sirach tells us, and though not quite canonical himself, his works are much esteemed

The Overseas Library

in Scotland for their "pawkiness." But, being practical, we see as little honour in higgling for thousands as for halfpennies, and call men "merchants" whether they carry packs upon their backs or send out ships freighted with shoddy goods to sell to niggers.

So no one asked his reasons, but accepted him just as he was, with headdress like an Inca of Peru stuck all about with pheasants' and peacock's feathers, bits of looking-glass, adorned with heather, and fastened underneath his jaws with a black ribbon; with moleskin waistcoat; bee in his bonnet; humour in his brain; with short plaid trousers, duffel coat, and in his hand a rude Caduceus made of a hazel stick, and in the centre a flat tin heart, set round with jingling bells, and terminating in a tuft of ling. In figure not unlike a stunted oak of the kind depicted in the arms of Glasgow, or such as those which grow in Cadzow Forest, and under which the white wild cattle feed, as they have done since

Heather Jock

Malcolm Fleeming slew one with his spear and saved the king.

The minstrel's features of the Western Scottish type, hard as a flint, yet kindly, his eyes like dullish marbles made of glass, such as the children in Bridge of Weir call "bools," his hair like wire, his mouth worn open and his nose merely a trap for snuff. Hands out of all proportion large, and feet like planks, his knees inclining to be what the Scotch call "schauchlin," and imparting to his walk that skipping action which age sometimes bestows on those who in their youth have passed a sedentary life. A true *faux bossu*, and though without a hump, having acquired the carriage of a hunchback by diligence, or sloth. In fact, he seemed a sort of cross between a low-class Indian, such as one sees about a town in South Dakota, and an orang-outang which had somehow got itself baptised.

From Kilmalcolm to Mauchline, from Dalry to Ayr, at a Kilwinning Papingo, at races,

The Overseas Library

meets, fairs, trysts, at country house or moorland farm, to each and all he wandered and was welcome.

His minstrelsy, if I remember right, was not extensive as to repertory, being comprised of but one dreary song about a certain "Annie Laurie," originally of a sentimental cast, but which he sang with humoursome effects of face, at breakneck speed, jangling his bells and jumping about from side to side just like a Texan cowboy in Sherman, Dallas, or some Pan Handle town during the process of a bar-room fight, to dodge the bullets. At the end he signified his wish to lay him down to die for the object of his song, and did so, elevating, after the fashion of expiring folk, his feet into the air and wagging to and fro his boots adorned with what the Scotch call "tackets."

Perhaps it was the dispiriting nature of the performance which drew sympathy from men whose lives were uninspired. They might have thought a livelier buffoon untrue

Heather Jock

to nature from his unlikeness to themselves. What he had seen during his wandering life he treasured up, relating it (on invitation), to his hearers in the same way an Arab or a Spaniard quotes a proverb as if it was a personal experience of his own. Once in his youth "west by Dalry" he chanced to see a panorama of the chief incidents of Scottish history. What specially attracted his attention (so he said) was when the lecturer enlarged upon the fate of Rizzio: "Man, he just depicted it so graphically ye fancied ye could hear the head gae dunt, dunt, dunting, as they pulled the body doon the stairs."

Our northern wit runs ghastly and dwells on funerals; on men at drinking parties, dead but quite the gentleman still sitting at the board; sometimes on people drunk in churchyards; but always alternating, according to the fancy of the humourist, from one to the other of our staple subjects for jesting, whiskey, or death. But Heather Jock, like other

The Overseas Library

memories of youth faded away, and the constant spectacle of much superior buffoonery in parliaments, in marts, at scientific lectures, literary clubs, and other walks of life, bore in upon me that all the world is but a pantomime, badly put on the stage by an incompetent stage manager, ourselves the mummers, and each man, according to the estimation he is held in by his fellows, a pantaloon or clown.

One day in Tucuman, amongst the orange gardens, mounting my horse, which for my personal safety I had to do with a bandage over his eyes and foot tied to the girth, and thinking that the business of my life, which then consisted chiefly in going out by break of day to round my cattle up (*parar rodeo*, as the Gauchos say), was not inferior after all to that passed in a European office—where men begin at twenty to enter nothings in a ledger, and old age creeps on them finding them bald-headed at the same task—I chanced to get some letters.

Heather Jock

The messenger who brought them slowly got off his horse ; his iron spurs, like fetters on his naked feet, clanked on the bricks of the verandah ; he seemed perturbed—that is, as much perturbed as it is possible to be upon the frontiers—his hat was gone, around his head he wore a handkerchief which had been white when it left Manchester some years ago ; his horse was blown and wounded, but still he stood impassively handing me the bag and asking after the condition of my health with some minuteness. Was he tired ? “ No, Señor, not over-tired.” Would he take a drink ? “ Yes, to the health of all good Christians.” Where was his brother who used to ride with him ? “ Dead, patroncito, and I hope in Glory, for he died like a Christian, killed at the crossing of the Guaviyú by the infidel who came on us as we were crossing, with the water to our saddle skirts.” This with a smile to make the unpleasant news more palatable in the delivery. Christian, I may explain,

The Overseas Library

upon those frontiers is rather a racial than a religious status. All white men are *ex officio* Christians, with the possible exception of the English, who, as they listen to their mass mumbled in English, not in Latin, are less authentic. However, said the Gaucho (always with my permission), he would saddle a fresh horse and with some friends go out to fetch the body.

Whilst he caught a horse—a lengthy operation when the horses have to be driven first to a corral and then caught with the lazo—I took the bag, with the feeling, firstly, that it had cost a man his life, and then with the instinctive dread which, when in distant lands always attends home news, that some one would be dead or married, or that at least the trusted family solicitor had made off with the money entrusted to him to invest.

Nothing of this was in the letters, only, as per usual in such cases, accounts of deaths and marriages of folk I did not know ; of fortunes

Heather Jock

come to those I most disliked, and other matter of the regulation kind with which people at home are apt to stuff their letters to their distant friends.

One of the letters had a scrap of newspaper inside it, with the announcement of the death of Heather Jock. "At Bridge of Weir upon the 13th instant, William Brodie, at the age of eighty-two, known through the West of Scotland to all, as Heather Jock."

So Heather Jock would strive no more with life, with people just as foolish if more wicked than himself, struggle no more against the difficulties of English concert pitch, and be with "Annie Laurie" and the other puny dead who erstwhile plied his trade. Then I remembered where I saw him last: at an old house in Scotland perched on a rock above the Clyde and set about with trees, the avenue winding about through woods and crossing a little stream on bridges made the most of by landscape-gardeners' art. I saw the yew-trees

The Overseas Library

under which John Knox is said to have preached and dealt with heresy and superstition, like the man he was, driving out all that kindly Paganism which is mingled with the Catholic faith, and planting in its stead the stern, hard, hyper-Caledonian faith which bows the knee before its God in a temple like a barn, and looks upon the miserable east end of Glasgow as a thing ordained by God. The tulip-tree, the yellow chestnut, and the laurels tall as houses all came back to me, the little garden with its curious stone vases and the tall hollyhocks. I saw the river with the steamers passing between the fairway marks, saw Dumbarton Castle on its rock and wondered how it could have been the seat of Arthur's Court, as wise men tell. Again I recollected that one day upon the sands I found the outside covering of a cocoanut and launched it on the Clyde just opposite to where the roofless house of Ardoch stood, and watched it vanish into nothing, after the

Heather Jock

fashion of an Irish peasant woman on the quay at Cork watching the vessel take her son away, and just as sure as she of the return.

Then it occurred to me that Heather Jock had been a different character from what he really was, and that there had been something noble and adventurous in his career. That he had, somehow, fought against convention, and preferred, after the fashion of Sir Thopas, to "liggen in his hood," and go about the world a living protest against the folly of mankind. But, God pardon me, for that way exegesis lies, with finding out of hidden, mysterious esoteric motives for common actions, after the fashion which would astonish many, who, if they came to life again, would find those worshipping who, in life, were their most bitter foes.

Nothing of moment was in the other letters, and when the neighbours mustered, armed with spears and rusty guns, lazo and bolas,

The Overseas Library

but each man mounted on a first-rate horse and leading another to run away upon in case of danger, I mounted a "picazo,"¹ which I kept for such occasions, knowing he was a horse "fit for God's saddle," and taking my rifle with me unloaded, not from superior daring, but because I had no cartridges.

Just at the crossing of the Guaviyú, close to a clump of "Espinillo de Olor," we found the body, cut and hacked about so as to be almost unrecognisable, but holding in the hand a tuft of long black hair, coarse as a horse's tail, showing the dead man had behaved himself up to the last, like a true Christian.

At the fandango after the funeral, during the hot night, and whilst the fireflies flickered amongst the feathery tacuarás, and lit the metallic leaves of the orange-trees occasionally with their faint bluish light, above the scraping of the cracked guitar, above the voices of the dancers when they broke into the chorus of

¹ A picazo is a black horse with a white face.

Heather Jock

the "Gato," above the neighing of the horses shut in the corral for fear of Indians, I seemed to hear the jangling of the dead fool's bells, and listen to the minstrelsy, such as it was, of the hegemonist of Bridge of Weir.

SALVAGIA

ALMOST the most horrible doctrine ever enunciated by theologians is, in my opinion, the attribution of our misfortunes to Providence. An all-wise power, all merciful and omnipresent, enthroned somewhere in omnipotence, having power over man and beast, over earth and sky, on sea and land, able (if usually unwilling) to suspend all natural laws, seated above the firmament of heaven, beholding both the evil and the good—discerning, we may suppose, the former without much difficulty, and the latter by the aid of some spectroscopie at present not revealed to men of science—sees two trains approaching on one line, and yet does nothing to avert the catastrophe or save the victims. Withal, nothing consoles humanity for their

Salvagia

misfortunes like the presence of this unseen power, which might do so much good, but which serenely contemplates so many evils.

I have often thought that, after all, there is but one idea at the bottom of all faiths, and that, no matter if the divinity be called Jehovah, Allah, Moloch, Dagon, or the Neo-Pauline Providence of the North Britons, the worshippers seem to esteem their deity in proportion as he disregards their welfare.

Some have maintained that the one common ground of all the sects was in the offertory ; but more recent reflection has convinced me that the impassibility of Providence provides a spiritual, if unconscious, nexus which unites in one common bond Jews, Christians (whether Coptic, Abyssinian, Greek, or Roman), Moham-medans, Buddhists, the Church of England, with that of Scotland, and the multitudinous sects of Nonconformists, who, scattered over two hemispheres, yet hate one another with enough intensity to enable mankind to perceive

The Overseas Library

that they have comprehended to the full the doctrines of the New Testament.

I know a little village in the country generally described in old Italian maps under the title of "Salvagia," where the providential scheme is held in its entirety. Nothing, at first sight, proclaims the fact why a great power should specially concern itself about the place. Still, is it not the case that, as a rule, blear-eyed, knock-kneed young men imagine that they touch the heart of every woman who pities their infirmities? Do not red-haired and freckled, cow-houghed maidens usually attend a fancy ball attired as Mary Queen of Scots, and think their fatal beauty deals destruction on the sons of men, unconscious that their lack of charms preserves them safe from those temptations by means of which alone virtue can manifest itself? That which holds, good of individuals often applies to people in the bulk. So of my village in Salvagia. A straggling street, looking upon

Salvagia

a moor, bordered by slated living boxes, each with its "jaw-box" at the door and midden at the back, its ugly strip of garden without flowers, in which grew currants, gooseberries, with nettles, docks, potatoes, and the other fruits known to the tender North.

In every house a picture of Dr. Chalmers flanked by one of Bunyan, and a Bible ever ready on a table for advertisement, as when a minister or charitable lady calls, and the cry is heard of "Jeanie, rax the Bible doon, and pit the whisky-bottle in the aumrie." Two churches and two public-houses, and a feud between the congregations of each church as bitter as that between the clients of the rival inns. No whiskey or no doctrine from the opposing tavern or conventicle could possibly be sound. No trees, no flowers, no industry, except the one of keeping idiots sent from Glasgow, and known to the people as the "silly bodies." Much faith and little charity, the tongue of every man wagging against his

The Overseas Library

neighbour like a bell-buoy on a shoal. At the street corner groups of men stand spitting. Expectoration is a national sport throughout Salvagia. Women and children are afraid to pass them by. Not quite civilised, nor yet quite savages, a set of demi-brutes, exclaiming, if a woman in a decent gown goes past, "There goes a bitch."

A school, of course, wherein the necessary means of getting on in life is taught. O education, how a people may be rendered brutish in thy name! Behold Salvagia! In every town, in every hamlet, even in the crofting communities upon the coast, where women till the fields and men stand idle prating of natural rights, the poorest man can read and write, knows history and geography, arithmetic up to the Rule of Three—in fact, sufficiently to overreach his neighbour in the affairs of life.

Still, in the social scale of human intercourse the bovine dweller in East Anglia is a prince

Salvagia

compared to him. How the heart shrinks, in travelling from London, when, the Border passed, the Scottish porter with a howl sticks his head into the carriage and bellows "Tackets—are ye gaeing North?" No doubt the man is better educated than his southern colleague, but as you see him once, and have no time to learn his inward grace, his lack of outward polish jars upon you. After the porter comes the group of aged men at Lockerbie, all seated in the rain, precisely as their forbears sat when Carlyle lived at his lone farm upon the moor. Then come barefooted boys selling the *Daily Mail*, the *Herald*, and *Review*, till Glasgow in its horror and its gloom receives you, and you lose all hope.

Throughout Salvagia "Thank you" and "If you please" are terms unknown. In railway trains we spit upon the floor and wipe our boots upon the cushions, just to show our independence; in cars and omnibuses take the best seats, driving the weaker to the wall

The Overseas Library

like cattle in a pen. In streets we push the women into the gutters, "It's only just a woman" being our excuse. Our hearts we wear so distant from our sleeves that the rough frieze of which our coats are made abrades the cuticle of every one it rubs.

Back to our village—"Gart-na-cloich," I think the name, meaning the enclosure of the stones. Stony indeed the country, stony the folks, the language, manners, and all else pertaining to it. Even the Parameras outside Avila, where every boulder is a tear that Jesus wept, is not more sterile. Not that Jesus had ever aught to do with Gart-na-cloich. The deity worshipped there is Dagon, or some superfetated Moloch born in Geneva.

In no Salvagian village is there any room for a gentle God. "Nane of your Peters; gie me Paul," is constantly in everybody's mouth, for every dweller in Salvagia studies treology. Faith is our touchstone, and good works are generally damned throughout the

Salvagia

land as rank Erastianism. Only believe, that is sufficient. "Show me your moral man," exclaims the preacher, "and I will straight demolish him"; the congregation nod assent, being convinced "your moral man" is not a dweller in Salvagia, or, if he was, that the profession of a "cold morality" on earth must lead to everlasting fire, in the only other world they hear of in the kirk.

Our sexual immorality, and the high rate of illegitimacy, we explain thus. No thrifty man would buy a barren beast. Therefore, as we cannot buy our wives and sell them, if they prove unprofitable, 'tis well to try them in advance, and as our law follows the Pandects of Justinian, being more merciful to those who come into a hard world through no fault of their own than that of England, the matter is put right after a year or so, and all are pleased. That which a thing is worth, is what it brings, we teach our children from their earliest days; we inculcate it in our schools, at mart and fair,

The Overseas Library

in church, at bed and board, and that accounts for the hide-bound view we take of everything. Anger and love move us not much : we seldom come to blows after the fashion of the people in the mysterious region that we call "up about England." A stand-up fight with knock-down blows is not our way, not for the lack of courage but from excess of caution and the knowledge that we have intuitively that calumny kills further off than blows. How we get married is a mystery I have never solved, for no Salvagian ever seems heartily to wish for anything, or, if he does, is far too cautious to make his wishes known. Perhaps that is the reason why the Germans drive us out from business as easily as the Norwegian rat expels the original black rat, or the European extirpates the natives of Australia.

Withal, we have our qualities, but well concealed, and only to be found after a residence of fifty years within our gates. In spite of kail-yard tales, we snivel little, and cant not much

Salvagia

more than our neighbours do ; and we have humour, though the kail-yarders record it not, for fear of troubling the Great Heart which only likes “a joke,” and is impervious either to humour or to wit. Sometimes we have a touch of pathos in our composition which startles, coming as it does from an unlikely source.

In Gart-na-cloich there dwelt one Mistress Campbell, a widow and the mother of four sons, all what we call “weel-doing” lads—that is, not given to drink, good workers, attenders at the church, and not of those who pass their “Sawbath” lounging about and spitting as they criticise mankind.

Going to church with us replaces charity—that is, it covers an infinity of things. A man may cheat and drink, be cruel to animals, avaricious, anything you please, so that he goes to church he still remains a Christian and enters heaven by his faith alone. Our faith we take from “Paul,” our doctrine from

The Overseas Library

Hippo, so that we need do nought but bow the knee to our own virtues, and be sure that we are saved.

No one could say that Mistress Campbell's cottage was neat or picturesque. No roses climbed the walls, nor did the honeysuckle twine round the eaves. For flowers a ragged mullein growing in a wall, a plant of rue, one of "old man," with camomile and gillyflowers, did duty. Apple and damson trees grew round the "toon," the fruit of which was bitter as a sloe. Beside the door the cheesestone with its iron ring, a "stoup" for water shaped like a little barrel, a "feal" spade, and a rusty sickle lying in the mud, gave promise of the interior graces of the house.

Inside the acrid smell of peat, with rancid butter, and the national smell of whiskey spilt and left to dry, assailed your nose.

All round the kitchen stood press beds in which the children slept. Before the fire grey woollen stockings dried whilst scones were

Salvagia

baking, and underneath the table lay a collie dog or two snapping at flies.

The inner chamber had the peculiar musty smell of rarely opened rooms. Upon the walls a picture of Jerusalem set forth in a kind of uphill view, was balanced by a sampler which may have been the Ten Commandments, the Maze at Hampton Court, the Fountains at Versailles, or almost anything you chose, according to your view. Not tidy or convenient was the house, but still a home of the peculiar kind that race and climate has made acceptable.

The widow's faith was great, her household linen clean, and her chief pride, after her sons, was centred in her cows, called in Salvagia "kye." She liked to sit in church and fall asleep, as pious people do during the sermon. Seated between her sons, her Bible in a handkerchief scented with lavender, she had the faith not merely able to move mountains, but with her Bible for a lever, had she but got a

The Overseas Library

fulcrum, to move the world itself. She knew her Church was right, the others wrong, and that sufficed her; and, for the rest, she did her duty to her sons and cows and to her neighbours.

Years passed by, the world wagged pretty much as usual in Gart-na-cloich; sometimes a neighbour died, and we enjoyed his funeral in the way we love, whilst listening in the house of woe to the set phrases of the minister which use has constituted a sort of liturgy.

Winter succeeded summer, and day night, without a thing to break the dreary life we think the best of lives because we know none else.

Years sat but lightly upon Mistress Campbell, for she had reached the time of life when countrywomen in Salvagia seem to mummify and time does nothing on them. Her sons grew up, her cows continued to give milk, the rent was paid in season. Nothing disturbed

Salvagia

her life, and folk began almost to murmur against Providence for His neglect to visit her.

Then came a season with the short, fierce spell of heat which goes before the thunder-storm, and constitutes our summer. In every burn the children paddled, trout gasped, and cattle sought a refuge from the midges in the stream.

A little river, in which before the days of knowledge, kelpies were wont to live, flows past the town.

Its glory is a pool (we call it linn) known as the Linn-a-Hamish. Here the stream spreads out and babbling in its course wears the stones flat as proverbs in the current of men's speech get broadened out. The boys delight to throw these flat stones edgeways in the air, to hear the curious muffled sound they make when falling in the water, which they call a "dead man's bell." Alders fringe the bank, and in the middle of the pool a little grassy promon-

The Overseas Library

tory juts out, on which cows stand swinging their tails, and meditate, to at least as good a purpose as philosophers. The linn lies dark and sullen, and a line of bubbles rising to the top shows where the under-current runs below the stream. In a lagoon a pike has basked for the last thirty years. In our mythology, one Hamish met his death in the dark water, but why or wherefore no one seems to know. Tradition says the place is dangerous, and the country people count it a daring feat to swim across.

There the four sons of Mistress Campbell went to bathe, and all were drowned. Passing the village, I heard the Celtic Coronach, which lingers to show us how our savage ancestors wailed for their dead, and to remind us that the step which separates us from the other animals is short. I asked a woman for whom the cry was raised. She answered, "For the four sons of Liliias Campbell." In the dull way one asks a question in the face of any shock, I said,

Salvagia

“What did she say or do when they were brought home dead?”

“Say?” said the woman; “nothing; n’er a word. She just gaed out and milked the kye.”

SNAEKOLL'S SAGA

THORGRÍMUR HJALTALIN was known throughout all Rangarvallar, down to Krusavik, up to Akureyri, and in fact all over Iceland, for his wandering disposition, his knowledge of the Sagas, and for his horse called "Snaekoll." He lived in Upper Horgsdalr, near the Skaptar Jokull, and from his green "tun" were seen the peaks of Skaptar Jokull, Orœfar, and the white cordillera of the vast icy Vatna.

A Scandinavian of the Scandinavians, Thorgrimur was tall and angular, red-bearded, yellow-haired, grey-eyed, and as deliberate in all his movements as befits an Iceland, compared to whom the Spaniards, Turks, Chinese, or Cholos of the Sierras of Peru are active,

Snaekoll's Saga

quick in design and movement, and mercurial in mind.

His house was built of Norway pine with door jambs of hard wood, floated almost to his home from the New World. Unlike most Icelanders, he had not profited too much by education, leaving Greek, Latin, and the "humanities" in general for those who liked them; but of the Sagas he was passionately fond, reading and learning them by heart, copying them out of books in the long evenings whilst his family sat working round the lamp on winter nights after the fashion of their land.

People were wont to say he was descended from some Berserker, he was so silent and yet so subject to sudden fits of passion, which came on generally after a fit of laughter, ending in wrath or tears. Berserkers, not a few, had lived in Rangarvallar, and it may be that moral qualities become endemic in localities, in the same way that practices still

The Overseas Library

cling to places, as in Rome and Oxford and some other towns where the air seems vitiated by the breath of generations long gone past.

Thus, in the future, when the taint of commerce has been purged away and the world cleansed from all the baseness commerce brings, it may be that for some generations those born in London, Liverpool, in Glasgow and New York, will for a time be more dishonest than their fellows born in cities where trade did not so greatly flourish, and so of other things.

Thorgrimur was married and had children, as he had sheep, cattle, poultry, dogs, and all the other requisites of country life. But wife and children occupied but little of his mind, though after the fashion of his countrymen he was kind and gentle to them, sought no other women, did not get drunk, gamble, or regulate his conduct upon the pattern of the husbands of more favoured lands. All his delight was to read Sagas, to dream of ex-

Snaekoll's Saga

peditions through the great deserts of his country, and his chief care was centred in his horses, and most especially in "Snaekoll," his favourite, known, like himself, for his peculiarities.

Whilst there are camels in the desert, llamas in Peru, reindeer in Lapland, dogs in Greenland, and caiques amongst the Esquimaux, Iceland will have its ponies, who on those "Pampas of the North" will still perform the services done by the mustangs of the plains of Mexico, the horses of the Tartars, Gauchos, and even more than is performed by any animal throughout the world. Without the ponies Iceland would be impossible to live in, and when the last expires the Icelanders have two alternatives—either to emigrate *en masse*, or to construct a system of highways for bicycles, an undertaking compared to which all undertaken by the Romans and the Incas of Peru in the same sphere would be as nothing.

No Iclander will walk a step if he can help

The Overseas Library

it; when he dismounts he waddles like an alligator on land, a Texan cowboy, or a Gaucho left "afoot," or like the Medes whom Plutarch represents as tottering on their toes when they dismounted from their saddles and essayed to walk. Ponies are carts, are sledges, carriages, trains—in short, are locomotion and the only means of transport: bales of salt fish, packages of goods, timber projecting yards above their heads and trailing on the ground behind like Indian lodge poles, they convey across the rocky lava tracks. The farmer and his wife, his children, servants, the priest, the doctor, "Syselman," all ride, cross rivers on the ponies' backs, plunge through the snow, slide on the icy "Jokull" paths, and when the lonely dweller of some upland dale expires, his pony bears his body in its coffin tied to its back, to the next consecrated ground.

So Thorgrimur loved "Snaekoll," and was proud of all his qualities, his size, for "Snaekoll" almost attained to fourteen hands,

Snaekoll's Saga

a giant stature amongst the ponies of his race. In colour he was iron-grey, with a white foot on either side, so that his rider had the satisfaction of riding on a cross, fierce-tempered, bad to mount, a kicker at the stirrup, biter, unrideable by strangers, but, as Thorgrimur said, an "ice-eater"; that is, able to live on nothing and dig for lichens on the rocks when snow lay deep, to feed upon salt cod or on dried whale beef, and for that reason not quite safe to leave alone with sheep when they had lambs. But for all that Thorgrimur did not care, and never grudged a lamb or two when he reflected that his horse could go his fifty miles a day for a whole week, and at the end be just as fresh as when he left the "tun."

Thick-necked, stiff-jawed, straight pasterns high in the withers, square in the croup, mane like a bottle-brush, tail long and thick, "Snaekoll" had certainly few points of beauty: still, as he stood nodding beneath his Danish saddle, hobbled with whale-hide hobbles, shod with

The Overseas Library

shoes made by Thorgrimur himself, stuck full of large round-headed nails and made long at the heel and curving up near to the coronet to protect his feet in crossing lava-fields, he had a gleam in his red eyes like a bull terrier, which warned the stranger not to come too near. This was a source of pride to Thorgrimur, who used to say, with many quite superfluous "hellvites," that his horse was fit for "Grettir, Burnt Njal, or Viga Glum to ride;" then, mounting him, he used to dash full speed over a lava field, sending a shower of sparks under his feet, cracking his whale-hide whip, and stopping "Snaekoll" with a jerk whilst sitting loosely with his legs stuck out after the fashion of all horsemen when they know they are observed.

To cross the Vatna Jokull, the great icy desert, which extends between the top of Rangarvallar and the east coast of Berufjördr, was Thorgrimur's day-dream. Others had journeyed over deserts, crossed Jokulls,

Snaekoll's Saga

as the icy upland wastes of Iceland are called, but in his time no one had yet been found to cross the Vatna. Now this idea was ever present in his brain during his lonely rides in summer from his home to Reykjavik, from thence to Krusavik, or as he jogged across the lava-fields or crossed the tracts on which grew birch and mountain ash a foot in height, which constitute an Icelandic forest; and in the winter, in the long, dark hours, he could not drive it from his head. Men came to laugh at him, as men will laugh at those who have ideas of any kind, and call him "Thorgrimur of Vatna Jokull, the Berserker of Rangarvallar," and the like, but none laughed openly, for Thorgrimur was hasty in his wrath, and apt to draw his whale knife, or at least spur his horse "Snaekoll" at the laugher's horse, as he had been a fighter in the ancient horse fights, and it was lucky if the horse that "Snaekoll" set upon escaped without some hurt.

The Overseas Library

In fact the man was a survival, or at the least an instance, of atavism strongly developed, or would have been so styled in England; but in Iceland all such niceties were not observed, and his compatriots merely called him mad, being convinced of their own sanity, as men who make good wages, go to church, observe the weather and the stocks, read books for pastime, marry and have large families, pay such debts as the law forces them to pay, and never think on abstract matters, always are convinced in every land.

Think on the matter for a moment, and at once it is apparent they are right.

The world is to the weak. The weak are the majority. The weak of brain, of body, the knock-kneed and flat-footed, muddle-minded, loose-jointed, ill-put-together, baboon-faced, the white-eye-lashed, slow of wit, the practical, the unimaginative, forgetful, selfish, dense, the stupid, fatuous, the "candle-moulded," give us our laws, impose their

Snaekoll's Saga

standard on us, their ethics, their philosophy, canon of art, literary style, their jingling music, vapid plays, their dock-tailed horses, coats with buttons in the middle of the back ; their hideous fashions, aniline colours, their Leaders, Leightons, Logsdails ; their false morality, their supplemented monogamic marriage, social injustice done to women ; legal injustice that men endure, making them fearful of the law, even with a good case when the opponent is a woman ; in sum, the monstrous ineptitude of modern life with all its inequalities, its meannesses, its petty miseries, contagious diseases, its drink, its gambling, Grundy, Stock Exchange, and terror of itself, we owe to those, our pugnosed brothers in the Lord, under whose rule we live.

Wise Providence, no doubt, has thus ordained it, so that each one of us can see the folly of mankind, and fancy that ourselves alone are strong, are wise, are prudent, faith-

The Overseas Library

ful, handsome, artistic, to be loved, are poets (with the gift of rhyme left out), critics of music, literature, of eloquence, good business men and generally so constituted as to be fit to rule mankind had not some cursed spite, to man's great detriment, cozened us out of our just due. So Thorgrimur was mad, and pondered on the crossing of the Vatna, day by day; not that he thought of profit or of fame—your true explorer thinks of neither. But like a wild goose making north in spring, or as a swallow flying south without a chart to shape his voyage by; or as a Seychelle coconut adrift upon some oceanic current all unknown to it, your true explorer must explore, just as the painter paints, the poet sings, or as the sworn Salvationist must try to save a soul, and in the trying lose perhaps his only friend—a perilous business when one thinks that souls are many, friends are few.

And still the Vatna Jokull filled Thorgrimur's imagination. Surely, to be alone in

Snaekoll's Saga

those great deserts would be wonderful, the stars must needs look brighter so far away from houses, the grass in the lone valleys greener where no animal had cropped it, and then to sleep alone with "Snaekoll" securely hobbled, feeding near at hand ; and, lastly—for Thorgrimur was not devoid of true Icelandic pride—the arrival one fine morning at the first houses above Berufjördr, calling for milk at the farm door, and saying airily, in answer to the inquiry from whence he came, from Rangarvallar, across the Vatna. That would indeed be worth a lifetime of mere living, after all.

Needless to say that no one in the time of Thorgrimur had ever passed over the Vatna from Rangarvallar, though the Heimskringla seemed to indicate that at the first settlement there had been such a road. Reindeer were known to haunt the wild recesses of the desert track, and some said, ponies long escaped had there run wild, and all were well aware that evil spirits haunted the valleys, for there the

The Overseas Library

older gods had all retired when Christianity had triumphed in the land.

Two hundred miles in distance, but then the miles were mortal, without food, perhaps no water, without a guide, except the compass and the stars. Seven days' ride on "Snaekoll," if all went well, and if it did not, why then as well to sleep alone amongst the mountains, as in the fat churchyard, for there men when they see your headstone growing green forget you, but he who dies in the lone Vatna surely keeps his memory ever fresh.

All through the winter, Thorgrimur talked ceaselessly about the execution of his dream. In spring, when grass is green and horses fat, when forests of dwarf birch and willow look like fields of corn, ice disappears and valleys as by magic are all clothed with grass, he made all boune to set out on his long-projected ride. "Snaekoll is eight years old (he said) and in his prime, sound both in wind and limb, and I am thirty, and if we cannot now prove ourselves

Snaekoll's Saga

of the true Icelandic breed the time will never come, old age will catch us both still scheming, still a-planning, and men will say that had we lived among the Icelanders of old, Snaekoll had been of no use at the horse-fighting, and I, instead of going a sea-roaming with Viga Glum, with Harold Fair-Hair, Askarpillir, with Asgrim, and the rest, would have remained at home and helped the women spin." His wife, after the practical way of womenkind, thought him a fool, but yet admired him, for she imagined that Thorgrimur in reading Sagas had come upon the whereabouts of some great treasure buried in times gone by, for she could not imagine that a man would risk his life without good reason, being all unaware that generally lives are risked and lost without a cause. Perhaps, too, she was willing enough for Thorgrimur to go, his musings, readings, wanderings, and uncanny ways rendering him an unpleasant inmate of the house.

But Thorgrimur cared nothing, or perhaps

The Overseas Library

knew nothing of her speculations, but got his saddle freshly stuffed, made whale-hide reins strong, new, and six feet long; purveyed a long hair rope, new hobbles, and for himself new whale-hide shoes like Indians' mocassins, new wadmal clothes, and laid up a provision of salt fish and rye-flour bread all ready for the start.

News travels fast in Iceland, as it does in Arabia, the Steppes of Russia, in Patagonia and other countries where there are no newspapers and where wayfaring men, even though fools, pass news along with such rapidity that it appears there is no need of telegraphs or telephones, for what is done in one part of the land to-day is known to-morrow miles away, and just as much distorted as it had been disseminated through the medium of the Press. Thus Rangarvallar and all southern Iceland knew of Thorgrimur's intention, and people came from far and near to visit him, for time in Iceland is held valuable, or at the least folk think it so, and, therefore, spend what they prize most after

Snaekoll's Saga

the fashion that most pleases them, and that by talking ceaselessly, mostly of nothing, though they can work as patiently as beavers, when they choose. And thus it came about that at the little church in Upper Horgsdalr a crowd of neighbours had assembled to see the start of Thorgrimur into the unknown wastes.

To say the truth the church was of as mean a presence as was the author of the most part of the faith expounded in its walls. Built all of rubble, roof of Norway pine, the little shingled steeple shaped like a radish, nothing about the building, but the bell cast centuries ago in Denmark, could be called beautiful; but still it served its turn and as a mosque in a lone "duar" in Morocco, stood always open for the faithful to use by day for prayer, and as a sleeping-place at night. In the churchyard, curiously marked and patterned stones bore witness to the supposititious virtues of those long dead, and from the mound on which the church was built, the view extended far across

The Overseas Library

lava-fields over the reddish mountains flecked here and there with green and crowned with snow, and in the distance rose the glaciers and the peaks of the unknown and icy Vatna. A landscape dreary in itself, unclothed by trees, wild, desolate, and only beautiful when the sun's rays transformed it, turning the peaks to castles, blotting the black and ragged lava out, and blending all into a vast prismatic play of colour, changing and shifting as the lights ran over limestone, rested on basalt, and lit the granite of the cliffs, making each smallest particle to shine like mica in a piece of quartz. The Icelanders do not hold Sunday as a day of gloom, devoted, as it used to be in England and still remains in the remoter parts of Scotland to which the beneficent breath of latter-day indifference has not yet penetrated, sacred to prayer and drink. So Sunday was the day on which Thorgrimur intended to set out; dressed in his best he sat at church, his wife and children seated by his side. The service done,

Snaekoll's Saga

he left the church, and pushing through the ponies all waiting for their owners outside the door, entered his house.

The priest, the "Syselman," the notables, and friends from far and near sat down to dine, and dinner over and the corn brandy duly circulating, Thorgrimur rose up to speak. "My friends, and you the priest and 'Syselman,' and you the notables, and neighbours who have known me from a boy, I drink your health. I go to try what I have dreamed of all my life ; whether I shall succeed no man can tell, but still I shall succeed so far in that I have had the opportunity to follow out my dream. I hold that dreams are the reality of life and that which men call practical, that which down there in Reykjavik the folk call business, is but a dream. 'Snaekoll' and I depart to cross the Vatna, perhaps not to return, but still to try, and so I drink your health again and say farewell, 'Skoal,' to you all."

The Overseas Library

Then mounting "Snaekoll," who stood arching up his back, he kissed his wife, and saying to his children, "Stand aside, for 'Snaekoll' bites worse than a walrus," he took the road. His friends rode with him for a "thingmánslied" upon the way, and when the last few scattered farms were passed and the track ended in a rising lava-field stretching to the hills, bade him God-speed and watched him sitting erect on "Snaekoll" fade into nothing upon the lava-fields, his horse first sinking out of sight and then his body, bit by bit, till he was gone. The priest, spurring his horse upon a rocky hill, claimed to have seen him last, and said that Thorgrimur never once looked behind, but rode into the desert as he was riding to his home, and that he fancied as he saw him ride, he saw the last of the old Berserks disappear. And then the Vatna claimed him, and Thorgrimur of Rangarvallar went his way out of this story and the world's.

But in east Berufjördr, not far from Hargifoss,

Snaekoll's Saga

there dwelt one Hiörtr Helagson, a man of substance, owner of flocks and herds, and as he sat one morning at his "bær" door, drinking his coffee sweetened with lumps of sugar-candy in the Icelandic fashion, waiting until his horse was caught to ride to church, his herdsman entered to inform him that he thought "Hellvite," the devil had got amongst the horses, for he said, "they run about as if in fear, and the dark chestnut which you ride has a piece bitten out of his back as by a wolf." Then Hiörtr Helagson, although the "Syselman" of Berufjördr and elder of the Church, swore like a horseman when he knows his horse is sick or come by mischief, and, taking down his gun, went to the pasture where his horses fed. The horses all were running to and fro like sheep, and in the corner of the field an object lay, dark grey in colour, like a Greenland bear. But when the "Syselman" had raised his gun, it staggered to its feet, and he, on looking at it, said to his herdsman, "Ansgottes, this is the

The Overseas Library

horse of Thorgrimur of Rangarvallar ; he must be dead amongst the ice-fields, and his horse has wandered here." Time passed and "Snaekoll" once again grew round and sleek, although a pest to all the horses in the "tun," and Hiörtr, thinking to cut a figure at a cattle fair, saddled and mounted him. "Snaekoll" stood still, though looking backwards, and when the "Syselman" was seated on his back, arching his spine, the horse plunged violently, and coming down with legs as stiff as posts, gave Hiörtr Helagson a heavy fall, and—turning on him like a tiger—would have killed him had not help been nigh. So, from that day, no one essayed to ride the dead man's horse, who ranged about the fields, and, after years, slept with the horses of the Valkyrie. But Hiörtr Helagson had the best ponies in all Berufjördr, hardy, untirable, and "ice-eaters," fiery in spirit, hard to mount, kickers and biters, apt to rear and plunge, fit for the saddle only of such few commentators as can catch the stirrup

Snaekoll's Saga

at the moment they are up. And when the neighbours talked about their temper and their ways, Hiörtr would say, "Well, yes, they are descended from the horse of Thorgrimur of Rangarvallar; his name was "Snaekoll," and he came to me out of the desert, lean as a bear in spring. You know his master died trying to cross the Vatna, and "Snaekoll" how he lived amongst the ice and found his way to Berufjördr, I cannot tell. Up in the Vatna there is naught but ice, and yet he must have eaten something; *what* it was, God knows!"

WITH THE NORTH-WEST WIND

AS we never associated William Morris with fine weather, taking him rather to be a pilot poet lent by the Vikings to steer us from the Doldrums in which we now lie all becalmed in smoke to some Valhalla of his own creation beyond the world's end, it seemed appropriate that on his burial-day the rain descended and the wind blew half a gale from the north-west.

Amongst the many mysteries of enigmatic England few have more puzzled me than our attitude towards our rare great men. No one can say that in our streets they jostle other passengers, pushing the average man into the gutter, which is his own estate. Neither in Church or State, or in religion, the Press, the army, amongst the licensed victuallers, or at

The North-West Wind

the Bar, do they abound so much as to take the profits of the various jobs I have referred to, from their weaker foes. It may be that we think them "blacklegs," working, so to speak, for too long hours at too high pressure; it may be that the Democratic sentiment, of which we hear so much and see so little, thinks them, as Gracchus Babeuf did, nothing but "aristos" sent by an unjust God (himself a *ci-devant*) to trample on us.

Genius in England is a thing accursed, and that it is unpleasing even to the creator of all Englishmen is manifest by the marked disapproval shown to it by the majority of the created. Therefore, I take it in the future, as the vote has, so to speak, been taken by the show of sneers, that we shall not be called upon to stand much more of it.

So the rain descended, and the north-west wind battled and strove amongst the trees and chimney-tops, swirling the leaves and hats into the mud, making one think upon the fisherfolk,

The Overseas Library

the men aboard the ocean tramps, the shepherds in the glens of Inverness-shire, upon the ranchmen out on the open prairie riding round the cattle, and on the outcasts of the El Dorado, crouching the livelong night under some Christian bridge or philanthropic railway arches.

I have a standing quarrel with "*le grand capricieux*" called Providence, but at a funeral it generally appears he does his best so to dispose the weather that the principal shall not regret the climate he has left. Seen through the gloom at Paddington, within the station, moving about like fish in an aquarium, were gathered those few faithful ones whom England had sent forth to pay respect to the most striking figure of our times.

Artists and authors, archæologists, with men of letters, Academicians, the pulpit, stage, the Press, the statesmen, craftsmen, and artificers, whether of books, or of pictures, or ideas, all otherwise engaged.

Philanthropists agog about Armenia, Cuba,

The North-West Wind

and Crete, spouting of Turks and infidels and foreign cruelties, whilst he who strove for years for Englishmen lay in a railway van.

The guilds were absent, with the Trades Unions and the craftsmen, the hammermen, the weavers, matchmakers, and those for whom he wrought.

Not that he was forgotten of those with whom he lived ; for in a little group, forlorn, dishevelled, and their eyes grown dim with striving for the coming of the change, stood his own faithful house carles from Hammer-smith, and they too followed their master to the end—standing upon the platform, as it were, on the brink of some new country over which they saw, but knew they could not reach.

When a great man dies in other countries all his last wishes are disregarded, even his family shrinks into second rank, and he becomes the property of those who in his life flung mud at or neglected him. Outbursts of cant, oceans of

The Overseas Library

snivel, are let loose upon his memory, so that it may be that in this instance our Saxon stodginess preserved us from some folly and bad taste. Yet I would have liked to see a crowd of people in the streets, at least a crowd of workmen, if 'but to mark the absence of the dead man's friends. Thus moralising, the train slipped from the platform as a sledge slips through the snow, and in the carriage I found myself seated between some "revolutionaries."

Had they been cultured folk, it is ten to one the talk had run upon the colour of the dead man's shirt, his boots, his squashy hat, and other things as worthy of remark.

Bourgeois et gens de peu, seated upon the hard, straight seats provided by the thoughtful company to mark the difference betwixt the passengers it lives off and those it cringes to, we moralised, each in our fashion, upon the man himself.

Kindly but choleric the verdict was; apt to break into fury, easily appeased, large-hearted,

The North-West Wind

open-handed, and the "sort of bloke you always could depend on," so said the "comrades," and it seemed to me their verdict was the one I should have liked upon myself.

So we reached Oxford, and found upon the platform no representatives of that old Trades Union there to greet us, and no undergraduates to throng the station, silently standing to watch the poet's funeral. True it was Long Vacation ; but had the body of some Buluwayo Burglar happened to pass, they all had been there. The ancient seat of pedantry, where they manufacture prigs as fast as butchers in Chicago "handle hogs," was all unmoved.

Sleeping the sleep of the self-satisfied were dons and masters and the crew of those who, if they chance once in a century to have a man of genius amongst them, are all ashamed of him.

Sleeping but stertorous, the city lay girt in its throng of jerry buildings, quite out of touch with all mankind, keeping its sympathy for piffing commentators on Menander ; a bottler-

The Overseas Library

up of learning for the rich with foolish regulations, a Laodicea which men like Morris long ago cast from their mouths and mind.

So the storm went with us to Witney, which seems as little altered as when the saying was, "A badger and a Witney man you can tell them by their coat." Arrived at Lechlade, for the first time it appeared the ceremony was fitted for the man.

No red-faced men in shabby black to stagger with the coffin to the hearse, but in their place four countrymen in moleskin bore the body to an open haycart, all festooned with vines, with alder, and with bulrushes, and driven by a man who looked coeval with the Saxon Chronicle. And still the north-west wind bent trees and bushes, turned back the leaves of the bird maples upon their footstalks, making them look like poplars. The rain beat on the straggling briars, showering the leaves of guelder roses down like snow; the purple fruit of privet and ripe hips and haws hung on the bushes with

The North-West Wind

the lurid look that berries only seem to have struggling through wreaths of bryony and Traveller's Joy and all the tangles of an unplashed hedge bordering a country lane in rural England. Along the road a line of slabs of stone extended, reminding one of Portugal; ragweed and loosestrife, with rank hemp agrimony, were standing dry and dead, like reeds beside a lake, and in the rain and wind the yokels stood at the cross-roads or at the openings of the bridle-paths. Somehow they seemed to feel that one was gone who thought of them, and our driver said, "We've lost a dear good friend in Master Morris; I've driven him myself 'underds of miles." No funeral carriages, but country flys driven by red-faced men in moleskins, carried the mourners, and in a pony cart a farmer, with a face as red as are the bottles in a chemist's window, brought up the rear, driving his shaggy pony with the air of one who drives a hearse.

Through Lechlade, with its Tudor church,

The Overseas Library

its gabled houses roofed with Winsford slates all overgrown with houseleek and with lichens, and with the stalks of wallflower and valerian projecting from the chinks, we took our way.

There, unlike Oxford, the whole town was out, and from the diamond-paned and bevelled windows gazed children in their print dresses and sun-bonnets which Morris must have loved. Then Farmer Hobbs' van drew up before the little church which is now rendered famous by the description of the illustrious man who sleeps so close to it. The row of limes, flagged walks, the ample transept and square porch, the row of sun-dials down the wall, most with their gnomons lost, is known to all the world.

Time has dealt leniently with it, and the Puritans have stayed their fury at the little cross upon the tower.

Inside, the church was decorated for a harvest festival, the lamps all wreathed with ears of oats and barley, whilst round the font and in

The North-West Wind

the porch lay pumpkins, carrots, and sheaves of corn—a harvest festival such as Morris perhaps had planned, not thinking he himself would be the chiefest firstfruit.

Standing amongst the wet grass of the graves, artists and Socialists, with friends, relations, and the casual spectators, a group of yokels faced us, gaping at nothing, after the fashion of themselves and of their animals. And then I fancied for a moment that the strong oak coffin, with its wrought-iron handles and pall of Anatolian velvet, was opened, and I saw the waxen face and features of the dead man circled by his beard, and in his shroud, his hands upon his breast, looking like some old Viking in his sleep beside the body of his favourite horse, at the opening of some mound beside the sea in Scandinavia.

So dust to dust fell idly on my ears, and in its stead a vision of the England which he dreamed of filled my mind. The little church grew brighter, looking as it were filled with the

The Overseas Library

spirit of a fuller faith embodied in an ampler ritual.

John Ball stood by the grave, with him a band of archers all in Lincoln green; birds twittered in the trees, and in the air the scent of apple-blossom and white hawthorn hung. All was much fairer than I had ever seen the country look, fair with a fairness that was never seen in England but by the poet, and yet a fairness with which he laboured to endue it. Once more the mist descended, and my sight grew dimmer; the England of the Fellowship was gone, John Ball had vanished, with him the archers, and in their place remained the knot of countrymen, plough-galled and bent with toil; the little church turned greyer, as if a reformation had passed over it. I looked again, the bluff, bold, kindly face had faded into the north-west wind.

NIGGERS

JAHVE created all things, especially the world in which we live, and which is really the centre of the universe, in the same way as England is the centre of the planet, and as the Stock Exchange is the real centre of all England, despite the dreams of the astronomers and the economists. He set the heavens in their place, bridled the sea, disposed the tides, the phases of the moon, made summer, winter, and the seasons in their due rotation, showed us the constant resurrection of the day after the death of night, sent showers, hail, frost, snow, thunder and lightning, and the other outward manifestations of his power to serve, to scourge, or to affright us, according to his will.

Under the surface of our world he set the minerals, metals, the coal, and quicksilver, with

The Overseas Library

platinum, gold, and copper, and let his diamonds and rubies, with sapphires, emeralds, and the rest, as topazes, jacinths, peridots, sardonyx, tourmalines, or chrysoberyls, take shape and colour, and slowly carbonise during the ages.

Upon the 'upper crust of the great planet he caused the plants to grow, the trees, bushes of every kind, from the hard, cruciform-leaved carmamoel,¹ to the pink-flowering Siberian willow. Palm-trees and oaks, ash, plane, and sycamore, with churchyard yew, and rowan, holly, jacaranda, greenheart and pines, larch, willow, and all kinds of trees that flourish, rot, and die unknown in tropic forests, unplagued by botanists, with their pestilent *Pinus Smithii* or *Cupressus Higginbottomiana*, rustled their leaves, swayed up and down their branches, and were content, fearing no axe. Canebrakes and mangrove swamps; the immeasurable extension of the Steppes, Pampas, and Prairies, and the frozen Tundras of the north; stretches

¹ *Colletia Cruciata*.

Niggers

of ling and heather, with bees buzzing from flower to flower, larks soaring into heaven above them; acres of red verbena in the Pampa; lilies and irises in Africa, and the green-bluish sage brush desert of the middle prairies of America; cactus and tacuarás, with istle and maguey, flax, hemp, esparto, and the infinite variety of the compositæ, all praised his name.

Again, in the Sahara, in the Kalahari desert, in the Libyan sands, and Iceland, he denied almost all vegetation, and yet his work seemed good to those his creatures—Arabs, Bosjemen, reindeer, and Arctic foxes, with camels, ostriches, and eider ducks, who peopled his waste spaces. He breathed his breath into the nostrils of the animals, giving them understanding, feeling, power of love and hatred, speech after their fashion, love of offspring (if logic and anatomy hold good), souls and intelligence, whether he made their bodies biped or quadruped, after his phantasy. Giraffes

The Overseas Library

and tigers, with jerboas, grey soft chinchillas, elephants, armadillos and sloths, ant-eaters, marmots, antelopes, and the fast-disappearing bison of America, gnus, springboks and hart-beest, ocelot and kangaroo, bears (grisly and cinnamon), tapirs and wapiti, he made for man to shoot, to torture, to abuse, to profit by, and to demonstrate by his conduct how inferior in his conception of how to use his life he is to them.

All this he did and rested, being glad that he had done so much, and called a world into existence that seemed likely to be good. But even he, having begun to work, was seized with a sort of "*cacoethes operandi*," and casting about to make more perfect what, in fact, needed no finishing touch, he took his dust and, breathing on it, called up man. This done he needed rest again, and having set the sun and moon just in the right position to give light by day and night to England, he recollected that a week had passed. That is

Niggers

to say, he thought of time, and thinking, made and measured it, not knowing, or perhaps not caring, that it was greater than himself; for, had he chanced to think about the matter, perchance, he had never chosen to create it, and then our lives had been immeasurable, and our capacity for suffering even more infinite than at present, that is, if "infinite" admits comparison. However, time being once created and man imagined (but not yet perfected), and, therefore, life the heavy burden being opposed on him, the Lord, out of His great compassion, gave us death, the compensating boon which makes life tolerable.

But to return to man. How, when, why, wherefore, whether in derision of himself, through misconception, inadvertence, or sheer malignity, he created man, is still unknown. With the true instinct of a tyrant (or creator, for both are one), he gave us reason to a certain power, disclosed his acts up to a certain point, but left the motives wrapped in mystery.

The Overseas Library

Philosophers and theologians, theosophists, positivists, clairvoyants, necromancers, cabalists, with Rosicrucians and alchemists, and all the rabble rout of wise and reverend reasoners from Thales of Miletus down to Nietzsche, have reasoned, raved, equivocated, and contradicted one another, framed their cosmogonies, arcana, written their gospels and Korans, printed their Tarot packs, been martyred, martyred others (fire the greatest syllogist on earth), and we no wiser.

Still man exists, black, white, red, yellow, and the Pintos of the State of Vera Cruz. A rare invention, wise conception, and the quintessence of creative power rendered complete by practice, for we must see that even an all-wise, all-powerful God (like ours) matures as time goes on.

An animal erect upon its feet, its eyes well placed, its teeth constructed to masticate all kinds of food, its brain seemingly capable of some development, its hearing quick, endowed

Niggers

with soul, and with its gastric juices so contained as to digest fish, flesh, grain, fruit, and stand the inroads of all schools of cookery, was a creative masterpiece. So all was ready and the playground delivered over beautiful to man, for men to make it hideous and miserable.

Alps, Himalayas, Andes, La Plata, and Vistula, Amazon, with Mississippi, Yangtse-kiang and Ganges, Volga, Rhine, Elbe and Don; Hecla and Stromboli, Pichincha, and Cotopaxi, with the Istacihuatl and Lantern of Maracaibo; seas, White and Yellow, with oceans, Pacific and Atlantic; great inland lakes as Titicaca, Ladoga, all the creeks, inlets, gulfs and bays, the plains, the deserts, geysers, hot springs on the Yellowstone, Pitch Lake of Trinidad, and, to be brief, the myriad wonders of the world, were all awaiting newly created man, waiting his coming forth from out the bridal chamber between the Tigris and Euphrates, like a mad bridegroom to run his frenzied course. Then came the (apparent)

The Overseas Library

lapsus in the Creator's scheme. That the first man in the fair garden by the Euphrates was white, I think, we take for granted. True that we have no information on the subject, but in this matter of creation we have entered, so to speak, 'into a tacit compact with the creator, and it behoves us to concur with him and help him when a difficulty looms.

Briefly I leave the time when man contended with the mastodon, hunted the mammoth, or was hunted in his turn by plesiosaurus or by pterodactyl. Scanty indeed are the records which survive of the Stone Age, the Bronze, or of the dwellers in the wattled wigwams on the lakes. Suffice it that the strong preyed on the weak, as they still do to-day in happy England, and that early dwellers upon earth seem to have thought as much as we do how to invent appliances with which to kill their foes.

The Hebrew Scriptures, and the record of crimes of violence and bad faith committed by

Niggers

the Jews on other races need not detain us, as they resemble so entirely our own exploits amongst the "niggers" of to-day. I take it that Jahve was little taken up with any of his creatures, except the people who inhabited the countries from which the Aryans came. Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Persians, and the rest were no doubt useful and built pyramids, invented hanging gardens, erected towers, observed the stars, spoke the truth (if their historians lie not), drew a good bow, and rode like centaurs or like Gauchos. What did it matter when all is said and done? They were all "niggers," and whilst they fought and conquered, or were conquered, bit by bit the race which God had thought of from the first, slowly took shape.

A doubt creeps in. Was the creator omniscient in this case, or did our race compel him, force his hand, containing in itself those elements of empire which he may have overlooked? 'Twere hard to say, but sometimes

The Overseas Library

philosophers have whispered that the Great Power, working, as he did, without the healthy stimulus of competition, was careless. I leave this speculation as more fit for thimblerriggers, for casuists, for statisticians, metaphysicians, or the idealistic merchant, than for serious men.

Somehow or other the Aryans spread through Europe, multiplied, prospered, and possessed the land. Europe was theirs, for Finns and Basques are not worth counting, being, as it were, a sort of European "niggers," destined to disappear. Little by little out of the mist of barbarism Greece emerged. Homer and Socrates, with Xenophon, Euripides, Pindar and Heraclitus, Bion, Anaximander, Praxiteles, with Plato, Pericles, and all the rest of the poets and thinkers, statesmen and philosophers, who in that little state carried the triumphs of the human intellect, at least as far as any who came after them, flourished, and died. Material and bourgeois Rome, wolf-

Niggers

suckled on its seven hills, waxed and became the greatest power, conquering the world by phrases as its paltry "Civis Romanus," and by its "Pax Romana," and with the spade, and by the sheer dead weight of commonplace, filling the office in the old world that now is occupied so worthily by God's own Englishmen. Then came the waning of the Imperial City, its decay illumined but by the genius of Apuleius and Petronius Arbiter. Whether the new religion which the pipe-clayed soldier Constantine adopted out of policy, first gave the blow, or whether, as said Pliny, that the Latifundia were the ruin of all Italy, or if the effeminacy which luxury brings with it made the Roman youths resemble the undersized, hermaphroditic beings who swarm in Paris and in London, no one knows.

Popes and Republics, Lombards, Franks and Burgundians, with Visigoths and Huns, and the phantasmagoria of hardly-to-be-comprehended beings who struggled in the darker

The Overseas Library

ages like microbes in a piece of flesh, or like the Christian paupers in an English manufacturing town, all paved the way for the development of the race, perhaps, intended, from the beginning, to rule mankind. From when King Alfred toasted his cakes and made his candles marked in rings¹ (like those weird bottles full of sand from Alum Bay) to measure time, down to the period when our present Sovereign wrote her "Diary in the Highlands," is but a moment in the history of mankind. Still, in the interval, our race has had full leisure to mature. Saxon stolidity and Celtic guile, Teutonic dulness, Norman pride, all tempered with east wind, baptized with mist, narrowed by insularity, swollen with good fortune, and rendered overbearing with much wealth, have worked together to produce the type. A bold, beef-eating, generous, narrow-minded type, kindly but arrogant; the men fine specimens of well-fed animals, red in the blood

¹ Staple industry of the Isle of Wight.

Niggers

and face ; the women cleanly, "upstanding" creatures, most divinely tall ; both sexes slow of comprehension, but yet not wanting sense ; great feeders, lovers of strong drinks, and given to brutal sports, as were their prototypes, the men of ancient Rome ; dogged as bull-dogs, quick to compassion for the sufferers from the injustice of their neighbours ; thinking that they themselves can do no wrong, athletic though luxurious ; impatient of all hardships, yet enduring them when business shows a profit or when honour calls ; moralists, if such exist, and still, like cats, not quite averse to fish when the turn serves ; clear-headed in affairs, but idealists and, in the main, wrong-headed in their views of life ; priding themselves most chiefly on their faults, and resolute to carry all those virtues which they lack at home, to other lands.

Thus, through the mist of time, the Celto-Saxon race emerged from heathendom and woad, and, in the fulness of the Creator's

The Overseas Library

pleasure, became the tweed-clad Englishman. Much of the earth was his, and in the skies he had his mansion ready, well aired, with every appliance known to modern sanitary science waiting for him, and a large Bible on the chest of drawers in every room. Australia, New Zealand, Canada, India, and countless islands, useful as coaling stations and depôts where to stack his Bibles for diffusion amongst the heathen, all owned his sway. Races, as different from his own as is a rabbit from an elephant, were ruled by tweed-clad satraps expedited from the public schools, the universities, or were administered by the dried fruits culled from the Imperial Bar. But whilst God's favoured nation thus had run its course, the French, the Germans, Austrians, Spaniards, Dutch, Greeks, Italians, and all the futile remnant of mankind outside "our flag" had struggled to equal them. True that in most particulars they were inferior. Their beer was weak, their shoddy not so artfully diffused right through their cloth, their

Niggers

cottons less well "sized," the constitution of their realm less nebulous, or the Orders of their Churches better authenticated, than were our own. No individual of their various nationalities by a whole life of grace was ever half so moral as the worst of us is born.

And so I leave them weltering in their attempts to copy us, and turn to those of whom I had intended first to write, but whom the virtues, power, might, and dominion of our race, have caused me to forget.

I wished to show Jahve Sabbaoth made the earth, planted his men, his beasts, his trees upon it, and then as if half doubtful of himself left it to simmer slowly till his Englishmen stood forth. I felt he was our God, jealous and blood-thirsty, as in his writings he has let us see ; our God, and we His people, faithful to bloodshed, not that we liked it, but because we knew we did His will. We are His people and it was natural that He should give mankind into our hand. But yet it seemed that we had grown so

The Overseas Library

godlike in ourselves that perhaps Jahve was waiting for us to indicate the way. He made the world and stocked it, planting apparently without design the basest peoples in the most favoured lands; then we stood forth to help him, and by degrés carried out all he thought of from the first.

In Africa, Australia, and in America, in all the myriad islands of the southern seas inferior races dwell. They have their names, their paltry racial differences, some are jet black, some copper-coloured, flat-nosed, high-featured, tall, short, hideous or handsome—what is that to us? We lump them all as niggers, being convinced that their chief quality is their difference from ourselves.

Hindus, as Brahmins, Bengalis, and the dwellers in Bombay; the Cingalese, Sikhs and Pathans, Rajpoots, Parsis, Afghans, Kashmiris, Beluchis, Burmese, with all the peoples from the Caspian Sea to Timur Laut, are thus described. Arabs are "niggers."

Niggers

So are Malays, the Malagasy, Japanese, Chinese, Red Indians, as Sioux, Comanches, Navajos, Apaches with Zapatecas, the Esquimaux, and in the south Ranqueles, Lenguas, Pampas, Pehuelches, Tobas, and Araucanos, all these are "niggers" though their hair is straight. Turks, Persians, Levantines, Egyptians, Moors, and generally all those of almost any race whose skins are darker than our own, and whose ideas of faith, of matrimony, banking, and therapeutics differ from those held by the dwellers of the meridian of Primrose Hill, cannot escape. Men of the Latin races, though not born free, can purchase freedom with a price, that is, if they conform to our ideas, are rich and wash, ride bicycles, and gamble on the Stock Exchange. If they are poor, then woe betide them, let them paint their faces white with all the ceruse which ever Venice furnished, to the black favour shall they come. A plague of pigments, blackness is in the heart, not in the face,

The Overseas Library

and poverty, no matter how it washes, still is black.

Niggers are niggers, whether black or white, but the archetype is found in Africa.

Oh Africa, land created out of sheer spleen, as if to show that even Jahve himself suffered at times from long-continued work ; in spleen, or else contrived out of his bounty to encourage us and serve as sweetener to his most favoured nation in its self-appointed task ! A country rich in itself, in animals, in vegetation, and in those minerals in which we chiefly see the evidence of the Creator's power. Rich, and yet given up to such a kind of men that they are hardly to be held as men at all. Scripture itself has asked half doubtingly if they can change their skins, but we who know the Scriptures as we know Bradshaw, making them books of reference in which to search for precepts to support our acts, are ready to reply.

The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, and

Niggers

therefore we are ready to possess his land and to uproot him for the general welfare of mankind, smiting him hip and thigh, as the Jews did the Canaanites when first they opened up the promised land. Niggers who have no cannons have no rights. Their land is ours, their cattle and their fields, their houses ours; their arms, their poor utensils, and everything they have; their women, too, are ours to use as concubines, to beat, exchange, to barter off for gunpowder or gin, ours to infect with syphilis, leave with child, outrage, torment, and make by contact with the vilest of our vile, more vile than beasts.

Yet take us kindly, and at once the tender nature of our hearts is manifest to all. Cretans, Armenians, Cubans, Macedonians we commiserate, subscribe, and feel for, our feeling souls are wrung when Outlanders cannot get votes. Bishops and cardinals and statesmen, with philanthropists and pious ladies, all go wild about the Turks.

The Overseas Library

England's great heart is sound, it beats for all the sorrows of mankind ; we must press on, we owe it to ourselves and to our God ; ours to perform our duty, his to provide the field ; the world is ours, let us press on to do our mutual will, and lose no time, in case inferior aping nations may forestall us, cut in between us and all those we burn to serve, and having done so, then shoot out their tongues and say. " These were but weaklings, and their God made in their image, merely an Anglo-Saxon and anthropomorphous fool."

AT TORFAIEH

A SHADE of dissatisfaction crept over the dark, handsome face of Najim, the Syrian, as he sat cleaning his pistol at the door of the factory at Cape Juby. In front the desert, flat, sandy, and grown over with low "sudra" bushes, as is the prairie overgrown with mezquite and with huisache in Western Texas. Behind, the sea, shipless and desolate, breaking upon the coast in long lines of surf, thundering and roaring ceaselessly. On the horizon a faint blue cloud just indicated the whereabouts of Lanzarote.

The factory itself, square-built and ugly, looking just like a piece of Manchester adrift in Africa, only redeemed from stark vulgarity by the cannon on the roof. Upon a little island, about three hundred yards to seaward, the fort looked frowningly, and showed the

The Overseas Library

nozzles of its three guns through embrasures pointing towards the shore, as emblems of the milder faith the pious traders hoped to introduce.

Mecca and Galilee ; the sword and fishing-net ; on the one hand barbarity, upon the other progress ; long guns, curved daggers, flying haiks, polygamy, the old-world life, opposed to cotton goods, arms of precision, store clothes, and the exterior graces which the interior virtues of our time and race induce. Outpost of progress, now, alas ! submerged once more in the dark flood of Islam ; portion of Scotland, reft from the mother country and erratically disposed in Africa in the same way that bits of Cromarty are found scattered sporadically about the map. Torfaieh was as Scotch, or even still more Scotch, than Peebles, Lesmahagow, or the Cowcaddens, for the setting went for nothing in comparison with the North British composition of the place. Decent and orderly the Scottish clerks,

At Torfaieh

the tall, red-bearded manager; Scotch the pioneer, known to the Arabs down into the Sahara as "M'Kenzie," he who had found the place, surveyed it, planned to submerge the desert, and to sail to Timbuctoo, had got the company together, had sweated blood and water and regarded "Juby" as the apple of his eye. Order and due precision of accounts, great ledgers, beer upon tap, whiskey served out "medicinally," prayers upon Sunday, no trifling with the Arab women ever allowed, a moral tone, a strict attention to commercial principles, and yet no trade, for by a cursed fate the "doddering" English directors who controlled the cash had sent an order that no trading should be done, as they were waiting for the time when a paternal Government should equip them with a charter, and place them on a level with the Niger Company, and the philanthropists who smoked the "niggers" in the caves of the Matoppo Hills.

Therefore the order ran, "Let no one

The Overseas Library

bringing trade approach the place," and natives having journeyed from the recesses of the desert with camels packed with wool, descried the factory low in the horizon, drank their last draught of water and hurried on their beasts, to find themselves greeted with rifle fire, and told to keep away. Then from the windows broke a fusillade of guns, and Najim, the Syrian interpreter, would mount upon his horse, and galloping towards the wondering, would-be traders, tell them on peril of their lives to keep away if they brought trade, but to come on and camp if they had none. This not unnaturally led to ill-feeling, for the wool had to be buried in the sand till, as the Arabs said, it pleased Allah to restore the Company to health.

And so they passed their lives like men upon a ship, not often daring to go far from their factory, occasionally venturing to hunt gazelles, but usually returning, hunted themselves by the exasperated Arabs, who fired on

At Torfaieh

them when and where they got a chance. But not to lose their hold entirely upon the place, the Company paid all the more important chiefs allowances, which they thought tribute, and a feeling of contempt sprang up, tempered with kindness and typified by the phrase "Our Christians;" these they protected and found necessary, but esteemed mad, as are, in fact, all Nazarenes and those who have no knowledge of the Faith. A pleasant, idle, not unhealthy, beery, and contemplative life; few stood it long, but sought relief in drink or else went mad, and all the time the Company were convinced the Arabs (whom they had never seen) were peaceably inclined, though they had had a manager murdered not half a mile outside the gate.

So all went well both up and down the coast, into the desert, and up to the Wad Nun, where Dahman-el-Beiruc reigned over the most fanatic of all the tribes. The legend grew about the mad Christians, who fired on

The Overseas Library

traders, but yet paid good allowances to chiefs to encourage trade, and welcomed every one so that he came with empty hands. And then, as if on purpose to confirm the Arabs in their belief that Nazarenes are all stark mad, another rival band of Bedlamites appeared, all bursting to acquire the hypothetic trade and to supplant their brother madmen in the race. Money was freely spent upon the chiefs, five thousand dollars falling to the share of one of them, who brought it loaded upon two camels to an employé of the Cape Juby Company to keep. Then these, too, faded into space, leaving some two or three of their adventurers captive amongst the desert tribes, and gloom settled upon Cape Juby, broken but by the three monthly visits of the chiefs for their allowance, and an occasional interchange of friendly shots at a long range with would-be traders from afar. But in the meantime Najim, the Syrian, rose from interpreter to manager, and all the while he did his duty,

At Torfaieh

entering sacks of rice and bags of bullets, chests of tea, barrels of gunpowder, cases of gin, and bales of cloth in ledgers, or seeing it was duly done by the Scotch clerks, the desert life took hold of him as it has taken hold of many another of those sons of Adam whom a cynic deity has cursed with imagination, and rendered them unfit for ordinary work. The wild old life, the camels, the lean and worthless-looking but untiring desert horses, the blue clad, long-haired Arabs, with their close bargaining for trifles, and boundless generosity in larger things, the low horizon, and the pure language spoken by the people—always a pleasure to a man of Arab blood—took so firm a grip of him that all his sympathies were outside the fort, and his desire was to be like the natives in thought and dress.

When not on duty he wore the Arab clothes, talked with the tribesmen, learned their lore, rode in the powder play, heard of the “ould

The Overseas Library

el naama" (son of the ostrich), the child, who, lost by his parents, had found a foster-parent in an ostrich, and in whose capture three good mares were tired, and by degrees insensibly grew to think the desert life the best which it has pleased Allah to show to man. All the chiefs knew him and looked on him as a sort of landmark set up between the Christians and Islam. Arab in blood, Arab in sympathy as regards the desert life, but yet a Christian, their wonder knew no bounds. "You speak like us, have our own skin, our eyes, read the Koran, and understand it; what then restrains you from saying you are one of us, joining the Faith, marrying amongst us, and leading amongst the tribesmen the life you say you love?" In fact, some thought he was a Moslem, but from policy pretended to be a Christian, until he, a Syrian of the Syrians, told them that for a thousand years his people had been Christians, and that, though not believing it, he yet would die a member of

At Torfaieh

the Faith in which he had been born. This took their fancy, for Arabs are always taken with a bold answer, and they said : " Najim, you are a man, that is the way to speak, Christian or Moslem, you are still our friend." Then cunning, as only they themselves, they sought for his opinion upon the reality of the conversion of other Syrians who had left the Company and married in the tribe. But he, at least as subtle as they themselves, answered evasively that the heart of man is as the darkness of a starless night, and God alone can see into its depths.

The Arabs laughed and said, " By the Nabi he knows as much as we ourselves," they knowing nothing of any subject under heaven but camels' footprints in the sand, signs of the weather, the names of some few stars, together with the daily ceremonials of their faith, which constitute their life.

So, as he sat cleaning his nickelled Smith and Wessen pistol, bought in New York, that

The Overseas Library

Mecca of all young Syrians, he saw far off upon the plain, dust rising, and was sure that it betokened the arrival of some chief, and as the allotted time for paying the allowances (or tribute) had not come, he knew, as trade by this time was well frightened off, that it portended the advent of some Arab come to beg. Nothing annoyed him more than these begging ventures of the chiefs. As manager he was tied down to a certain set allowance, and yet to send a man away after, perhaps, a three weeks' journey empty-handed, was impolitic, and besides hurt his feelings, for, like all generous - minded men, "No" stuck in his soul; and when pronounced, even with reason, rose up against him as a meanness, for, though quick-witted as most Syrians are, he was not of the race of men who, pending the due carrying out of Scripture, possess the earth.

Like ships almost hull down on the horizon, the caravan appeared, and first the riders, on the low scrubby plain, seemingly seated in the

At Torfaieh

air, and then the camels heaving into sight, swaying and sliding through the sand, their long necks waving to and fro as every now and then they snatched a bite from the low, thorny scrub. Perched on them, their faces veiled, spears in their hands, their riders sat, and in the wake eight or ten semi-naked men on foot, driving the donkeys, without which, in the West Sahara no train of camels is complete. Lastly, a group of horsemen, all armed with guns and sitting on their high red saddles, swathed in their indigo robes, impassable and with the far-off look as if the eye saw through the middle distance and did not take it in, being fixed on the horizon, which is peculiar to all riders on frontiers, deserts, and to those whose safety rests on their power of seeing the approaching stranger first.

Arrived before the factory the travellers halted, made their camels kneel, got off, and set about their preparations for a camp in the methodical but dawdling way that travellers

The Overseas Library

on camels all affect. Then they sat talking fully an hour, for every movement in the desert is as much discussed as amongst Indians in America, or amongst county councillors deliberating what next to lay upon the ratepayer; and it by no means follows that men, having reached their journey's end, enter the city they have arrived at, or begin the business on which they have set out, for if the council so determines, it is just as likely that they may all return without a word. But in an hour or two, prayers duly said, dates and rice eaten, green tea discussed, a single figure, veiled to the eyes, wrapped in a blue burnoose, and holding in its hand a long flint gun, hooped round the barrel with brass, and with a Spanish dollar hanging from the twisted stock, stalked to the house and asked for Najim, Najim el Shami, and was admitted through the iron-plated door into the courtyard of the house. There Najim received him, and he began, "Ah, Najim, my

At Torfaieh

heart has longed for you ; in the desert below Sagiet-el-Hamara I said, ‘ I will arise and take my camels and will see my friend. Is he not chief of all our Christians ? ’ So I unveiled my head, and in the sight of all men, openly, I took my way. All men know of me, my name is Bu Dabous ; when men ask of me, Najim, say you know my name. Many have sought my friendship, letters arrive asking me to be true to them, some from the Sultan, five from Dahman-el-Beiruc. I tell you, Najim, five from Dahman-el-Beiruc. What did I do ? I, Bu Dabous, give not my friendship lightly, so I said, ‘ The Sultan, well, he is far away, his messenger may wait, and Dahman-el-Beiruc, how can I answer so many letters all at once ? I will seek Najim, and will tell him of my straits.’ Ah, Najim, in my tents there is nothing ; sugar, no sugar, tea, not a pound, no powder, and my children naked for want of cloth. So I took only five camels, and but ten of my best friends, and came to

The Overseas Library

seek you Najim, knowing you are my friend, and that whilst you lived you would not let men say that Bu Dabous came to ask a favour and returned unblessed." Then Najim, sore perplexed, took up his parable. "Ah, Bu Dabous, right glad am I to see you, and the Company in all their letters write to me saying that they regard you as a friend. But, still, you know I am but manager, and it is far beyond my power to give you what you want. Each article I take is to be paid for, and you do not wish, I think, that I should be a loser by my friend. Yet, as a friend, I will exceed my power, and on my own account take from the store a bale of cloth, two chests of tea, a cask of sugar, and some gunpowder. These shall be yours, so that you may not say I am insensible to friendship, and disregard the trouble you have taken to come so far." Then Bu Dabous rose gravely from his seat and said, "Najim, I was deceived. I fear you are no friend, but a true Christian at the heart, one

At Torfaieh

of these men who know no generosity, and whose sole God is pelf. Money, money, that is the Christians' God. That which you offer me is not enough for even one of my ten friends. Was it for this I sent the Sultān's messenger away and left five letters from Dahman-al-Beiruc without reply? But, Najim, not to shame you," and as he spoke he touched the Syrian lightly on the chest with his long, thin, brown hand, dyed blue with rubbing on his woad-stained clothes, "I will take credit from you, and all shall be arranged. The credit shall be large, not to disgrace me, and that the Company may say Najim does business with a wealthy man. Close to Shangiet, not fifteen days from here, I have five or six thousand dollars of fine wool. Now, therefore, give me forty chests of tea and twenty bales of cloth, a cask of gunpowder, ten guns, some lead, a hundred loaves of sugar, and add, just as a favour for myself, a pair of scissors and a little knife to trim my nails."

The Overseas Library

Poor Najim heard the demand with horror, and refused point-blank, and Bu Dabous, seating himself again, said, "Here will I sit, O Najim, till your heart speaks and I receive that which I want." His patience done, Najim called to his native police, and bidding them take from the store some tea and sugar and a bale of cloth, had Bu Dabous conducted to the gate. But from the middle of the men who pushed him roughly a voice arose. "See how your soldiers use your friend, give me, I pray, the scissors and the little knife." Then after a due interval had passed, slowly the "cafila" took the road towards the south, swaying and waving to and fro, passed out into the desert, raising a column of fine dust; the donkeys followed, and the horsemen bringing up the rear, turned in their saddles and fired a harmless volley at the fort.

Then, as he looked from off the roof, Najim beheld them slowly melt into the low horizon,

At Torfaieh

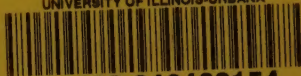
the footfalls of their animals dulled in the sand, the riders perched high on their camels, or sitting upright on their horses, their guns carried erect like spears. Lastly they sank into the sand from whence they came, and Najim, lighting a cigarette, descended from the roof, and going to his office turned to his ledger with a sigh.

*Acknowledgment is hereby made of
the previous appearance of these Stories
in "Saturday Review," "Justice," and
"Badminton."*

The Grosbham Press

UNWIN BROTHERS,
WORKING AND LONDON.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 046409154